

Islam In The Islands



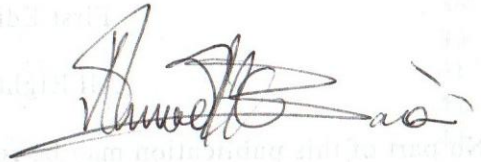
Removing The Impediments

By:

Hafiz Ahmad Jibreel Saeed

ISLAM IN THE ISLANDS

-REMOVING THE IMPEDIMENTS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hafiz Ahmad Jibreel Saeed', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hafiz Ahmad Jibreel Saeed

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FOREWORD

Christianity is still the dominant religion in the South Pacific Islands. To begin with, it was spread by the colonists to facilitate their control over the colonies, make the people obedient, easy to govern and keep opposition in check. Christianity in the Pacific has had all the say in the running of governments with the pastors occupying the most influential positions on the islands.

Though the Islanders now claim Christianity as their state religion and heritage, every tribe and sub tribe is free generally to practice rituals and traditions that their pre-Christian ancestors observed so long as they observe the weekly Church service on Saturday or Sunday and abide by the other rules that their particular church leaders deem necessary. So every tribe, every ethnic group and sub tribe is more or less free from strict regulations so long as they believe that the "blood of Christ" has washed away their sin and belief in him is salvation.

Islam on the other hand is both deliberately or out of ignorance, maligned and misrepresented to keep the populace from delving deeply into its true merits lest people might accept its beautiful teachings and code of conduct thereby cutting off the strings of dependence on the colonisers whose presence, influence and opinion is still very much dominant in this region.

May Allah bless Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV, the then Supreme Head of the world wide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community for his vision and genuine love for the people of the Pacific Islands. Under his guidance and instructions Alhaj Hafiz Ahmad Jibreel Saeed was sent all the way from Ghana, West Africa, first as a missionary teacher to Fiji, then Tuvalu and Kiribati and later as a roving missionary for the South Pacific Islands. Alhamdulillah! due to his concerted effort and genuine love and concern for our people in the Islands; the seed of Islam Ahmadiyyat has been planted in Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Ponape (Micronesia) and Samoa. Some of these places have only a handful of members whereas others have considerably larger following.

Hafiz Ahmad's keen understanding of people and his natural down-to-earth approach, perseverance and his tolerance of people's ignorance and hostility has earned him success where many would have simply given up. All praise

belongs to Allah; Hafiz Ahmad is patient and very knowledgeable about other religions and larger contemporary world issues which are quite apparent in the pages of this enjoyable but serious book. He does not readily take offence, therefore weathering the initial barrage of hostility and unfounded accusations against Islam as a result people are reduced to listening to what he has to say in defence of Islam.

Islam Ahmadiyyat does not only face opposition from other religions but also from mainstream Islam. Some of these Muslims are more a hindrance to the effort of relating the true face of Islam because they simply misrepresent Ahmadiyyat branch of Islam and assign strange beliefs to Ahmadis which are false and unfounded quite similar to what Christianity does to Islam.

This book has been written under the instructions of the Supreme Head. The topics and questions are very relevant to what we face daily in our dealings with our people in the Islands. I personally was a 'Sunni' Muslim but I cannot thank Allah enough for making it possible for me to meet Hafiz Ahmad. Through his patience and intellect all my queries were answered to my satisfaction and I now know the true path to Allah the Almighty. I do not claim to be a perfect Ahmadi Muslim, it'll take a whole lifetime's effort but at least the way is sure. I pray that those who read this book will pray to Allah the Almighty to open their hearts and minds and give them the courage to accept the truth and the strength to stand firm once they recognise and accept the truth. For accepting Islam Ahmadiyyat is only the beginning, you will feel the trials; pains and joy of Almighty Allah's love only after accepting the truth.

It will be remiss of me if I do not mention the support and prayers and sacrifice of Hafiz Sahib's dear wife Hannah and their children who were with him in Fiji and Tuvalu initially in all his endeavours for the service of Allah. We beg Allah's choicest blessings for Hafiz Ahmad and his family.

Mrs. Khairul Nisha Biribo & Dr. Marewenteiti Ali Biribo, of Kiribati and Fiji Islands).

INTRODUCTION

Islam is one of the greatest religions of the world and one of the greatest civilizations that man has ever known. Today about 1.2 billion out of the total world population of 6 billion people on this planet consider themselves Muslims. The contribution of Muslims to art and science and human development in the past is well known and acknowledged. The spiritual impact of Islam and its moral teachings have had a profound effect on the destiny of mankind in the past fourteen centuries.

Unfortunately, Christianity, in general refused to recognize the positive contribution of Islam to the world until very recently. The recent recognition of Islam by the most important Christian establishment, the Vatican, is a radical change of heart indeed.

The Vatican Council in a declaration in 1965 said:

"Upon the Muslims the Church looks with esteem. They adore one God, Living and Enduring, Merciful and All-powerful Maker of heaven and earth, Speaker to man. They strive to submit wholeheartedly even to this inscrutable decrees". The Pope expressed similar sentiments publicly in 1982 and since then different church establishments have been more accommodating than before.

Islam however has been very generous to Christianity right from the beginning even though there have been numerous conflicts in the past between these two greatest religions of the world. The Holy Quran, which is the Holy book of the Muslims, has in numerous places spoken highly of Judeo-Christian prophets and the Christians in general.

"... And thou shalt assuredly find those who say, 'We are Christians to be the nearest of them in love to believers (Muslims) because amongst them are savants and monks and because they are not proud.'"

Holy Quran Ch. 5:83

Unfortunately, beginning from the time of the Crusaders, Christianity has been persistent in hostility towards Islam, slandering the Holy prophet of Islam and the religion in sometimes very harsh words.

Muslims also in reaction to the Christian hostility launched attacks of their own. The past many centuries have therefore been a long period of unnecessary acrimony and misunderstanding. While the debate over the superiority of one over the other will and should continue and the battle for the hearts and allegiance of mankind will continue mostly between Islam and Christianity, mutual recognition and respect should contain this debate from breeding bigotry and intolerance.

Contrary to firmly held but erroneous belief, Islam advocates peaceful propagation of religion and ideas. The truth and beauties of Islam is being propagated peacefully but vigorously across the world by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission which was founded by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India about a century ago. He claimed and proved that he was the Promised Messiah and the great Reformer prophesized in all religions of the past to come in later days to call mankind to the path of righteousness through Islam. Our area, the Pacific, is still considered the backyard of the world, the changes in ideas and concepts that go on in the world reach the Islands in Pacific very late even though the internet is fast bridging the intellectual gap. As recently as 1990 some priests in some of the islands were still preaching that Islam is the religion of devil despite the clear Vatican declaration.

These priests, it seems have never heard of the official Catholic declaration on Islam as quoted above.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission under its spiritual head, Imam, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad the fifth successor of the Promised Messiah, has undertaken the responsibility of inviting people of all races and background to Islam to drink from its spiritual spring.

This booklet is intended for a special purpose only. There are excellent books on Islam and all aspects of Islam. This is not an addition to that. **It is primarily aimed at answering numerous questions that trouble the minds of our friends in the islands of the Pacific.** It may be useful also for those people who have no access to books on Islam. Many of our friends on these Islands ask a lot of questions on Islam and war. Terrorism, polygamy, some want to know what Allah is, whether Muhammad taught Muslims to kill

Christians etc. Some ask whether Muslims truly revere camels and if so, why. Instead of lamenting over the ignorance of the people who put such questions we as Muslims should blame ourselves for not educating the people about Islam for so long.

The style of presentation in some sections is probably not the *Pacific Way* but one has to consider that this book comes as a response to objections sometimes clouded in hostility and many a time deliberate attempt to hurt the feelings of Muslims. One should therefore excuse us for the polemical way of presenting the facts in some sections.

It is written with the principal aims of removing misunderstandings and impediments that may stand in the way of those who sincerely want to know Islam and compare its teachings and practical impact with Christianity. We hope and pray that Allah the only

True God may make this book a means to open the way for all pure and righteous souls in the acceptance of the truth - Islam.

Since the first edition was printed 1994 the world has seen many upheavals and undergone many changes that has had profound implications on everyone. In 1995 the most horrendous massacre in Europe since Second World War took place in Srebrenica under the protection of the U.N. troops. 8000 Muslim men and boys were taken to slaughter fields by Serb invaders who are orthodox Christians. Their leaders had openly boasted that there was no place for Muslims in Europe. The infamous destruction of the World Trade Centre, New York on September 11, the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the removal of the Taliban from power by the United States and its allies is now part of the history of the beginning of this millennium. The controversial invasion of Iraq, the removal, capture and execution of Saddam Hussein has created more insecurity especially for American citizens all over the world. Many people in the West have become more hostile to Islam due to ignorance. People are asking more questions than ever about Islam. It has therefore become necessary to visit the book again to revise it, taking into consideration the developments of the past few years. I wish to mention Mr. Basharat Ahmad Khan for assisting once again in the work. It seems he is destined to be part of this work all the time.

May Allah the Ever Merciful reward him and all my dearest brothers and sisters who contributed, directly and indirectly towards the completion of this humble effort.

All true praise belongs to Allah, The Only true God.

PREFACE

Ask any man in the street anywhere in the Pacific islands about war, bloodshed and terrorism." Without hesitation the most likely response you will get is "Islam". Islam is projected as the religion that was spread with the sword and indeed it seems as if Islam has nothing to offer humanity except bombing, bloodshed and tears. In fact sometimes it looks as if war itself, was invented by Islam. Even when a Muslim nation is attacked!

Some Muslims have also contributed to this false perception by invoking the holy name of Islam for their actions even though what they seek to achieve by violence has nothing to do with the true Islam. For Christian writers to portray Islam in a negative manner is not surprising because in the battle for the hearts and soul of mankind, Islam in recent years has been making rapid progress at the expense of Christianity. One way to stop the progress of Islam is to project it to the world in frightening and barbaric manner, devoid of love, reason and human values.

Recently we came across people who have been warned about Islam in one of the Pacific Islands by a priest. The priest had warned the simple and honest people who were interested in Islam never to accept this religion because he alleged "if you enter Islam and wanted to leave it tomorrow for any reason, they will chop off your head. Muslims are killers," he said.

On my visit to our members in one of the Island countries, the immigration officer on knowing that I am a Muslim acted very rudely and said to me without any hesitation 'why have you come here, we don't want Muslims here what have you come here for! go to Iraq and fight' I wonder if ever this young apparently inexperienced officer would one day find himself travelling through Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur or Senegal and how will he feel if he being a Christian, is rudely treated for all the sins and bloodshed committed in the name of Christianity throughout the ages!

In the past Christian missionaries from Europe vigorously carried distorted views about Islam to their colonies all over the world. Recently events in the Middle East, though political, have not helped the Muslim cause.

However in this modern period of serious and objective study of opposite beliefs and views, some Western Christian scholars have seriously and strongly challenged this fabricated image of Islam. So what caused this historical misrepresentation. Why such a misinterpretation of Islam?

We must remember that information about Islam supplied to the non-Muslim world was written and presented by Christians in the past. The non-Muslim world learnt of Islam from the European Christian colonizers across the globe, people who had the misleading belief that Salvation is found only with Christianity. Recently in higher institutions of learning across the world, Orientalists have taken the responsibility of informing the world about Islam. Most of the learned members of this club almost exclusively belong to the Christian faith, people who essentially believe that Islam is a false Religion (God forbid) and the holy founder, Muhammad, false in his claim. Naturally one cannot expect a writer who starts from such a wrong assumption and biased mentality to paint an objective picture of Islam.

This situation could be compared to asking a senior member of the Chinese Communist party to educate the world on the merits of Western democracy. On the other hand it has also been noted that some modern Orientalists are much more objective comparatively than their predecessors, taking a more balanced view of Islam than before even though most of them have not had the courage to accept the fact that the Holy prophet Muhammad is indeed a true messenger from the Almighty. This has naturally influenced their learned research and conclusions.

The Muslims must also share the blame for this situation. Muslims have taken the truth of their religion as so obvious, so rational and clear that they do not pursue the task of bringing to non Muslims non Arabic speaking peoples' facts about Islam and its practical role for mankind in ensuring peaceful co-existence and the love of God and His creation. Complacency has been the Muslim attitude while Christian evangelists vigorously carry Christianity all across the globe.

Good books on Islam in English are a very rare commodity indeed in the world generally and more so in the Pacific Islands. The few that

are available are found mostly in the libraries of the West. The great historical and biographical works of Hisham and Tabari etc were in Arabic until very recently.

The late Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, Ameer Ali and a crop of Muslim scholars in the West lately have produced some of the best original works on Islam. After them in the past twenty years notable changes are taking place as books on Islam are emerging in western languages.,

In the last quarter of the 19th century Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India was commissioned by Allah to rectify the distorted image of Islam presented to the world by its enemies and also correct the misrepresentation of Islam by some of Islam's supposed defenders.

Even though most Muslims rejected Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claim to Devine commission, quite in accordance with the situations of earlier men of God and messengers, his detractors nevertheless could not deny the fact that he rendered extraordinary services to Islam. He proved decisively beyond doubt that the so-called Jihad, holy war to force unwilling people to accept Islam is a fable for the uninformed and ignorant. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) created a community within Islam which took upon itself the task of presenting the pristine Islam to the world, the original Islam which has nothing to do with violence bloodshed or terrorism. It is this Islam which has been introduced in the Islands of the Pacific under the guidance of the Khalifahs or successors of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

Not quite long ago the Church of Tuvalu published a booklet, which contained the introduction to the Religions represented in Tuvalu. The chapter on Islam in this booklet contains very serious errors, which must be rectified. It is quite clear that the learned authors did not have access to facts and authentic materials on Islam and have depended on the usual sources, which are seriously defective. The intention of writing this book is also to correct the misinformation in that booklet as well.

It is our humble prayer that may the Almighty God make it a means for the correction of misconceptions and deeply seated prejudices.

May it bring about better understanding and promote tolerance and thus contribute to peace and brotherhood among people of all faiths,

Amen.

Hafiz Ahmad Jibreel Saeed.

CHAPTER 1

WAR AND AGGRESSION.

Peace is a precious gem; those who have experienced both war and peace will sacrifice everything for peace. It is those who have not experienced war, suffering and violence who do not appreciate the peace that they enjoy and therefore take things for granted.

All religions preach peace and condemn war violence and aggression. Islam means peace through submission to the will of Allah and peaceful co-existence with fellow human beings. Islam teaches that if mankind, all of us, despite our differences ethnically racially and religious persuasions agree to submit ourselves to the commandments of the Almighty, the Originator and Sustainer of life, the illusive peace will indeed prevail everywhere.

Islam nevertheless is not a collection of idealistic dogmas. It recognizes that there will always be a section of the society who will not conform to the moral and spiritual values and norms and as a result, open the door to conflicts, war and suffering. It is not for the want of fine teachings that is why we have so many conflicts in the homes, within families and among nations. It is our inability or unwillingness to obey and conform to the fine teachings of the men of God that has driven away peace and harmony from our societies. For this reason even if the whole world chose to follow only one religion, this impossible situation alone cannot guarantee an end to all wars.

Show me any religion whose members have not raised war cries against each other in history. Many a time membership of one religion is not enough to bring peace to nations or within a nation.

Buddhists have killed Buddhists in Southeast Asia from time immemorial and continue to do so despite the fine teachings of Buddha. Hindu Rajas destroyed each other even before Islam came to India. One of the scriptures of Hinduism BHAGVAT GITA is also a story about war. The Jains who shudder from killing even insects in their religion have not hesitated to join the army and kill. Muslim nations and sects have fought each other despite the fine teachings of the Holy Quran that

'Surely all believers are brothers' ch.49;11.

Christianity has probably caused the greatest bloodshed in human history. People in this part of the world do not have access to the darker aspects of Christian history. In Africa, the North and South America, large parts of Asia and Australia, native populations have almost become extinct due to aggressive actions of Europeans colonizers who carried the cross and the Bible along with them wherever they went. Those who hunted down the native populations of Australia pushing women and children over the cliffs were most often practicing Christians. Since our Christian friends are telling people about Islamic terrorism and Islamic wars all around, it is only reasonable also to examine the Christian attitude, teachings and recorded history of war. The Christian conduct of war should be put to scrutiny. But before that, let us consider human legacy with respect to war in general.

MANKIND AND WAR.

Wherever the remains of man have been found, weapons and instruments of bloodshed have been found together with works of art and pottery. Men have been killing each other for various reasons throughout history. In fact the blood of man shed by man in the past if made to flow will overwhelm the Nile in floods many times over. After all are we not the children of *Biblical Cain*? If we had descended from Abel the history of mankind might have been different? Man has killed for so many reasons, for land, for food, for a woman, and ideas, for tribal or family honour and in case of Halaku Khan for sport. Daughters of Cain have also killed and poisoned rivals for various reasons including jealousy. Religion, which was to help tame the Cain in man, has rather contributed to the rivers of blood. Man by nature is a killer. This is the verdict of one group of anthropologists including Robert Ardery*. He argues that mans aggressive nature, killer instinct will finally determine his future on the planet not his reason or civilization. In essence it is his nature not nurture which holds our fate he argues.

An Arab poet praising his hero says:

Every man in his lifetime is addicted to

A hobby and the hobby of Saifu Daulah

Is waging war on his enemies.

The other group argues to the contrary. They say the clubs spears and axes found buried with men are primarily instruments for hunting for food. They have been used in wars as well but man resorted to wars only when threatened or felt the need to protect his family, tribe or source of food. Ashley Montagu, prominent among this group of anthropologists point to the fact that the overwhelming majority of people abhor bloodshed and killing and in every given society killers are one in thousands and in no way represent the society or mankind in general, whatsoever. Hitlers and Halaku Khans or even as in the poem above, the Saifu Daulahs, are very few among millions.

Islam shares the latter view. Islam says man by nature is peaceful and a reflection of God.

AFRICAN GENESIS by Robert Ardery

MAN AND AGGRESSION 2ND Edition by M.F. Ashley Montagu;

The Holy Quran says

'Surely we created man in the best make, but if he misbehaves he is brought to the low of lowest.' Ch. 95:5-6

This means it is only when he loses his human nature that he becomes genocidal.

On the philosophical debate as to whether Religion as such has been useful for mankind or one of the main causes of hatred, animosity, war, and bloodshed as many have argued, one should consider a world without the restraining influence of the Religions, the beautiful teachings of the prophets and great religious founders, the message of peace and brotherhood which resonates much greater in the sermons of the genuine religious leaders, their influence which has tamed tyrants and men of violence. Religion, despite its misuse by some of their leaders for many unreligious objectives has served mankind

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very well. It has tamed the Cain in us throughout human history when nothing could have tamed or restrained man.

It is the Europeans, Christians who invented the obnoxious trans-Atlantic slave trade, one of the greatest crimes in human history, granted but it is also the church leaders who stood in the forefront for the campaign to abolish this evil trade in humans. Religion by its very nature of humility does not sing the stories of its achievements and positive contribution to human development. The religious extremist who have caused a lot of sorrow and suffering are people who have lost their way and totally misunderstood the fine essence of their faiths, whether they are Hindu or Christian extremists or Muslim or Jewish terrorists. This is a fact. Followers of all religions, apart from the many good work for the world, have also contributed to the sorrows of mankind. For our purpose here now it is important to remember that violence in the name of religion has never been the monopoly of one faith. Let us examine the Christian conduct in the matter of violence. This will educate our friends who have only learnt of 'turn the other cheek' in Christianity

CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS ON WAR?

'But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek; turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever compels thee to go mile, go with him twain, Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.

We have heard that it has been said; Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, love thy enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you:

That you may be the children of your Father, which is heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust'

Here are most beautiful teachings without doubt.

These verses are quoted most often in an attempt to show the pacifist nature of Christianity.

For about 300 years after Jesus Christ, Christians suffered untold hardship especially under the brutal Nero before they gained power and influence with the conversion of Constantine. Many Christians died meekly, many were crucified and tortured and one is tempted to conclude that those who died as a result of oppression were following these beautiful saying of Jesus. The view is naive and over simplification of the facts. The Christians before Constantine were weak and helpless. The mighty Roman military power was used to hunt them down. Resistance in such circumstances often brought more cruelty even to innocent family members. The Roman treatment of the Jewish resistance after Christ was an ever-present reminder to others. Meekness in such situation is not purely an act to obey the teachings of Christ; it was the only sensible way. Others who were not followers of Christ or had never heard "Turn the other cheek" also behaved in likewise manner. Millions of people in all faiths have met similar situations and faced death and martyrdom with dignity and bravery like early followers of Christ rather than do the wish of oppressors and persecutors. The helplessness of the early Christians however does not in any way diminish the value of their sacrifices. Their steadfastness in that terrible situation of state sponsored oppression is most praiseworthy.

As soon as the Christians gained the upper hand these teachings of Jesus ceased to be relevant. The rights of the Jews were restricted and later they were hunted down. All calamities were blamed on the Jews, who accordingly were persecuted. For the Jews the pages of history are full of oppression in the name of Christ. Consciously or unconsciously the Christian powers of the West created the state of Israel for the Jews partly to atone for centuries of persecution in Europe. Even people holding different views within Christianity were declared heretics burnt alive or thrown over the

cliffs. The Crusaders whose main aim was to win Jerusalem for Christ, on their way to pursue this aim, these men of Christ unleashed terror and genocide on the Orthodox Christians of Constantinople. They also massacred more than 800 Jews, retaliation for what the forefathers of the Jews did; they crucified Jesus.

In Europe hundreds of Jews were burnt alive when the terrible plague broke out. Jews were held responsible for the plague. These are historical facts.

'Tantum religion potuit swadere malorum!'

So great were the enormities that religion could induce human beings to perpetrate! -- Roman Epicurean Philosopher "translated by Arnold Toynbee.

BIBLICAL TEACHING ON WARFARE

The Biblical teachings on war and conduct of war, I am sure will shock modern Christians. Nevertheless Christians cannot repudiate these Biblical teachings and remain true Christians. The greatest personality in the Bible for Jews, and second greatest for Christians, Moses, in his books teaches total extermination of nations who did not agree to be the slaves to "*God's chosen people*" ... Deut. 20:10-20.

'When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.

And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shall besiege it:

And when thy Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male therefore with the edge of the sword:

But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord hath given thee.

Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities, which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.

But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breathe.

But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittite, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hittites, and the Jebusites as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee;"

Those who live in glass houses do not throw stones... so the saying goes.

Comment here is tasteless! Also please refer to Josh 8:26-29.

The argument sometimes put forward by some Christians that this is the teaching of the Old Testament is useless. Surely these Christians do not carry the Old Testament as a decoration to the New Testament. Christians eagerly quote from the same Old Testament to support or prove the claims of Jesus and his Messiahship. When the missionaries went along with soldiers to colonize and Christianize the world, they never left the Old Testament behind as outdated teachings.

The Catholic missionaries sent by the King of Spain went to the island of Saipan accompanied by soldiers. In order to quickly win the island for Christ 700 men were massacred by the soldiers and their women and girls taken over by the soldiers to guarantee the island and their subsequent progeny for Christ. They had little patience for persuasion or meticulous preaching to explain 'the Kingdom of God'. (See the encyclopedia under Saipan)

The comparatively more humane Christian Western conduct of war in recent years is not due to sudden discovery of Christian values or the impact of Jesus' teaching. It is rather ironical that the less dogmatic

more secular the Christian nations become the more humane and more tolerant their conduct develops.

The Crusaders, those who fought for Christ and Christianity, followed this teaching of the Bible quoted above meticulously. When they captured Jerusalem temporally, this Biblical teaching was fully and zealously followed. With the strokes of the sword and spearing, the Muslims and Jews were physically exterminated even orthodox Christians who did not belong to the Western or Papal Christianity were also put to the sword,

Colin Thubron in his famous book "Jerusalem" writes:

"In June 1099 Godfrey de Bouillon, Robert of Normandy, Tancred, Baldwin and Raymond of Toulouse spread their camp before the northern walls of a city which the Fatimids had recaptured and refortified the year before, and stormed them in mid-July. The Jews were burnt in their synagogues, the Muslims slain by thousands in the streets, until no enemy remained, and at evening the soldiers exchanged fresh clothes for those which were blood-stained, and walked barefoot with sighs and tears through the holy places of the city where the Savior Jesus Christ had trodden as a man, and sweetly kissed the ground which his feet had touched".

Now compare the acts of the Christians with the Muslim conquerors from the same author.

"There was no massacre when the Muslims retook Jerusalem, and then Saladin, it is said wept when he saw the bereaved Crusader women, and released many with his own hand".

The greatest killing that has ever taken place in human history was in the Second World War. This was started and mostly fought by Christians in Christian lands with the exception of the Japanese adventurism.

All reasonable people remember the terrible massacre of the natives of South America by Christian Spanish expeditions sent with the blessings of the church even now with great shame and remorse. In some parts of the Pacific the native populations have almost been

completely wiped out or reduced almost to extinction by European nations who are surely not Muslims.

The greatest suffering of the African people, the infamous Trans-Atlantic slave trade was organized and carried on by Christians Western nations. One of the early ships, which took slaves from Africa to America, was christened "*JESUS CHRIST*".

Slavery was not invented by Christian Europeans, granted, but the way and manner in which trans-Atlantic slave trade was conducted has left a permanent damage on the black race. One African American put it this way; "They stole my dignity forever."

The most heinous apartheid system was devised and sustained by Christian white settler race in South Africa who usually were very religious and practicing Christians. The Dutch Reformed Church provided the theology and dogma for the validity and practice of apartheid until under pressure from other Christian churches and outcry from the whole world, the Dutch Reformed Church also came out against Apartheid in its dying days. Like the trans-Atlantic slave trade, pious practicing Christians legalized it but it is also true that prominent Christian leaders waged a determined campaign against apartheid; the Rev. Allan Boesak and the Black Nobel Prize laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu were in the forefront. If we apply the same rule and journalism used to brand all Muslims "terrorists" for the acts of the Al-Qaeda or similar groups in the Middle East, we will be completely justified to say that Apartheid is a brainchild of Christianity. After all the Dutch Reformed Church is not a Muslim or Hindu sect. They claim to be good Christians and are generally very religious. If Hizbullah in southern Lebanon is the true representative of over billion Muslims in all the continents of the world, why can't the white South African Reformed church be the true representative of 1.5 billion Christians?

The logic of this comparison is only to point out the fallacy of the argument around here that Islam is a Terrorist Religion due to the problems in the Middle East and acts of violence by few Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere in the recent past.

Muslim writers, journalist and broadcasters have not branded all Christians as killers or sadist even though the world's only Atom

bombs were dropped by a Christian nation, so has been most of the recent killings in history. Muslims realize that even though these killings are carried on by Christian nations, these acts do not represent the teachings of Jesus. They are Christians fighting for political, national and economic interests. Would Christian newsmakers also realize that land and politics are the cause of the Middle East chronic violence, not Islam! The Taliban or Al Qaida is not Islam.

TERRORISM

We have entered a new millennium. Unfortunately, the dawn of the new millennium did not usher in peace prosperity, respect for human rights and a new world order that was proclaimed by the American President George Bush Senior after the first Gulf War. The new millennium came with tears, bloodshed and terrorism unprecedented in human history. The event of September 11 was only the climax, a few decades before this event; the seed for this was being sown in the Middle East, the land of the world's greatest monotheist Religions,

Is it not strange that the land of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad and indeed most of the known prophets, men of peace and love has become the arena for chronic conflict and bloodshed? Every sound observer is asking what is wrong with the Middle East.

The Holy Quran puts it this way

"And man is asking what is wrong with her (the land) Ch. 99:4

Whichever way you look at it, terrorism is one of the most serious threats to the collective well-being of all of us, the victims and even those who are not directly associated with it. In our case it gives a bad name to Islam especially since many of these groups use the Holy Name of Islam for their actions. The result is that in many countries people often take a hard look at Muslims and with funny thoughts in their minds. I have recently experienced such a situation in my world travels.

Who is a terrorist? Even the United Nations has not come up with universally acceptable identification of terrorists. It was only after

the infamous event of the September 11 that the Security Council agreed that Al-Qaeda is indeed a terrorist organization and required the member countries of the U.N. to take measures to fight them. Whatever our political or religious differences we cannot differ on the central elements of terrorism.

Terrorism is different from war in the sense that *terrorism is indiscriminate action in which innocent non-combatant people; women and children are killed and made to suffer. Terrorism is the use of indiscriminate violence and fear to achieve aims, legitimate or otherwise.* The question then arises, what about the governments, which clearly use terror to maintain control over a people. Such states will definitely not consider themselves terrorist states. So who is to prepare the list acceptable to us all?

In the recent past when we had the apartheid in South Africa, he who was a terrorist to the South African government was a freedom fighter to the oppressed South African blacks. Officially the A.N.C was a terrorist organization in South Africa. An internationally respected leader, the then British Prime Minister, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher declared in the face of Commonwealth leaders in Kuala Lumpur that the A.N.C. was a terrorist organization. Almost the whole world did not agree, but rather accepted their struggle as legitimate. The suffering Blacks of South Africa thought that the respected Mrs. Thatcher was crazy. Some Western Nations and Israel see the P.L.O. as a terrorist organization. The Arabs and more than 3/4 of humanity think they are freedom fighters. If it were not the threat of U.S. Veto the P.L.O. would have been a fully respected member of the U.N. Even now it has an observer status in the U.N.

THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF MODERN TERRORISM

Before one could understand modern terrorism and suggest a remedy, one would have to understand the root cause. If we cannot diagnose the ailment properly how can we treat it? But even before that let me make a categorical and unequivocal statement on where Islam stands on terrorism.

Islam as we are all aware means peace, peace through obedience to our Creator and peace with fellow human beings irrespective of colour creed or race. Islam is not, never, pathologically anti-America or Anti-West or Anti-anybody. Therefore Islam opposes any such action, which will negate peace, tranquility and order in the world.

There are several verses of the Holy Quran, which warns against bloodshed and general disorder.

'Allah does not like disorder' Ch 2:206

'Allah does not love those who create disorder and mayhem'.

Terrorism in any shade or colour for any reason is therefore clearly contrary to the teachings, principles and spirit of Islam. Islam has never sanctioned any indiscriminate action, which results in the killing of the innocent or destruction of property. Whether it is the kidnapping of Americans in Beirut by Hizbullah, the suicide bombing of a school bus in Haifa, Israel by Hamas, the assault on refugee camp by Israel Army under any pretext or the use of *Agent Orange*, a chemical weapon by Americans in Vietnam, these are all terrorism; they are immoral according to Islam. For all these actions, the perpetrators give reasons and justifications. Islam rejects the reasons because they spread terror and death to mostly the innocent.

People have very short memories. The fact of history is that despite struggle for supremacy between Islam and Christianity in the past centuries Islam has in most cases been very tolerant to other communities. There is nothing fundamentally anti-Jewish with Islam. Let us remember that when the Jews suffered persecution in Europe, it was Muslim Spain and North Africa that gave them refuge. Muslims never considered the killing of Jews a religious obligation. The whole problem started with the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 after the terrible suffering of the Jewish people over the two thousand years. Probably if more consultation had taken place, if the fears of the Palestinians had been taken into account at that time, the world would have been spared this cycle of violence.

SUICIDE BOMBING

Let everyone remember that suicide bombing is not the invention of the Palestinians. The Japanese freely practiced it during the Second World War. They loaded airplanes with bombs and crashed them into American ships in the Pacific, killing themselves and destroying ships with all the men in it. They considered this an honourable act and were known as *Kamikaze*. The Japanese were not and are not Muslims. Suicide bombing is not a recent invention.

The Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka freely used suicide bombers long before the Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Some cabinet Ministers of Sri Lanka were killed in a suicide bombing while the president had a narrow escape. Indeed one of the Prime Ministers of India, Rajiv Gandhi was killed in a suicide bombing by a Tamil woman who detonated the bomb tied under her sari. The Tamils are mostly Hindus. If anything at all, the Palestinians have learnt from these celebrated or infamous examples. And not all Palestinians are Muslims anyway. Is suicide bombing terrorism? Ask the Japanese, the Tamils and also the Palestinians. What one should remember for now is that Islam does not sanction suicide bombing whatever the justification. Life is sacred and one must not take life including his or her own. The Holy Quran does not allow for a Muslim to kill himself or herself.

"And do not kill yourselves, Indeed Allah is Merciful to you" Holy Quran CH. 4:30.

The suicide bombers in Palestine are desperate people who are driven to this act by decades of humiliation and subjugation by Israel.

In 2003 a Palestinian Christian girl expressed this desperation by suicide bombing, killing herself and many others. Just before she detonated the bomb she shouted the famous battle cry 'Allahu Akbar' which means 'God is The Greatest' As an Arab she was within her linguistic rights to use these famous words. Ignorant reporters thought this girl was also a Muslim.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

During the cold war, when the West and the Communist Russia battled for supremacy across the globe, the Russians invaded Afghanistan; according to them they were "invited" by Afghan government. The Americans, fearing that a Communist State in Afghanistan was a mortal danger to the Western interest in the Gulf and the Middle East, organized multinational and internal resistance, trained, financed and equipped the resistance movements to oust the Russians.

Since Godless communism was an anathema to Muslims, the West overplayed the Communist card encouraging extremist Muslim groups like Qutbuddin Hikmatyar and Mullah Umar against the Russians. At that time their extremist Islam was a valuable asset to the West. They were called *Mujahideen* and brave Muslim freedom fighters. The then Afghan government of Najibullah and the Russians considered the Mujahideen 'terrorist adventurers' as they made no distinction between civilians and Russian soldiers.

The Mujahideen was 100 per cent Muslim. Even after the withdrawal of the Russians they continued to launch missiles into the cities killing mostly innocent people. Surely neither the teachings of Islam, nor the practice of the noble Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be on him taught them to behave in such an appalling manner. The Mujahideen killed thousands of the ordinary citizens of Kabul and the same West saw nothing wrong with that. Apparently no effort was made to restrain them by their sponsors rather; the West called them "brave Afghan freedom fighters" not "Muslim terrorists". The same story is everywhere. 'One man's meat is another man's poison'.

In a beautiful poem the Arabs says:

'In this manner the age has divided the fortunes among her people,

The tribulations of one nation is a good fortune for others'

Finally the pro Soviet government of Kabul fell and within a short time the extremist Taliban faction led by Mullah Umar, won the civil

war that followed. Now you had a lot of trained fighters some of them with a lot of money and weapons supplied by the United States and the West, people with little respect for human life in power but mostly unemployed.

The remnants of the same anti communist fighters assembled from Algeria, Syria, Egypt Saudi Arabia and elsewhere now idle later developed into the modern terrorist groups.

How true is the old saying, '*The idle mind is the devil's playground*'

The Taaliban, the most organized group among the anti-communist freedom fighters/terrorists actually originated from the religious schools in Pakistan mostly the North-West Frontier Province. Recruits were made from the students of the Religious seminaries, trained and sent to fight in Afghanistan; the curriculum included a heavy dose of hatred and misplaced definition of Jihad. This is why the Pakistani government is now trying overhauling the whole religious schools or Madrassahs. Osama Bin Laden is the creation of these circumstances. He was one of the foreign fighters who came to help oust the Russians and he personally received training from the CIA and the SAS. This is no secret. The so-called fundamentalists served the West very well; they had no problem with their fundamentalism at that time since the enemy was the communists.

The Holy Quran warns;

'O ye who believe be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a peoples' enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just. That is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is aware of what you do.'

Ch. 5:9

If the West had firmly opposed and restrained the Mujahideen from committing terrorism against the citizens of Kabul, and warned them that killing innocent people was unjust and cannot be tolerated, even in a legitimate war, most probably we would not have experienced September 11 later.

Finally after the expulsion of the 'hated' communists and the defeat of their installed puppets by people who had little respect for innocent non-combatants, we had the Taliban in power under whose protection some of the Mujahedeen developed into the Al-Qaeda.

NA WHO CAUSAM! (And who is responsible)

'If you prepare a poisonous potion for others you end up taking some yourself', so say our wise men.

With the atheist communist defeated, this bunch of extremists looked for a new enemy, the American presence in Saudi Arabia, unqualified support for Israel and apparent control of the Middle East gave them the excuse for their new 'Jihad'

This is merely the historical perspective of the problems the world is facing today. This does not in any way justify the killing and bombing of innocent Americans.

In the past many years Algeria has suffered the worst type of terrorism with people who claim to follow the Holy Quran and Sunnah committing some of the most heinous crimes in human history. They raided sleeping villagers raped the very young, kidnapped some and slit the throats of the rest just because they have political differences with the government in power. It is shameful for us to associate such groups with Islam. It may be mentioned here that the Holy Prophet when sending forces into war warned the Muslims not to touch the women, children, the very old and even monks and their places of worship. So which prophet are these people following? The Algerian terrorists are also some of the remnants of the Afghanistan adventurers.

The second problem is the Palestinian issue. Allah knows why the world pretends that the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, which has been, breeding suicide bombings on one hand and the killing of refugees almost every day on the other, is simply the problem of Hamas fanatics. It is extremely stupid to simply blame Hamas without considering the fact that Palestinians, people like you and I are born in tents, in refugee camps, they live marry and die in such camps. For them life is futile, without future, without meaning, without hope. How many sermons to such people will calm them down!

I have already made it quite clear that, this situation is never an excuse for suicide bombing of school buses and Islam is categorical about this but we must also realize that a desperate person loses the capacity to reason. After all who wants to die such a horrendous death! The suicide bomber is really a very desperate person who believes wrongly that if he is humiliated in this world, if there is no hope of freedom from Israeli occupation, if the world worries about the omissions and commissions of other nations, if all our worry is about Saddam Hussein but never care about what Israel does, then he will die now in order to get paradise and the life of dignity after death.

Terrorism has become the weapon of the weak and oppressed, a wrong weapon indeed as it invites more suffering even as waging war is the weapon for a frightened nation like the US after September 11 for such wars creates more ill-will, more enemies and more insecurity in the long run. Militarily in the United States *appears* to have prevailed in Afghanistan and Iraq, but are Americans more safer now in the world? Ask them!

All things said and done, we Muslims also need to reign in some of our Imams who deliver inflammatory sermons to incite violence. There is no doubt in the fact that we have an ignorant and hostile media but is it not true that we most often emphasize the virtues of dying as martyrs totally ignoring the Jihad Kabir and Jihad Akbar.

Last October, in the United States I decided to have a medical check-up. The doctor who examined me was an Arab immigrant from Lebanon. He was a Christian. As soon as he saw that I was a Muslim he pounced on me attacking Islam with all the venom at his command. Actually he was being very unprofessional. A patient should never be made to undergo such an ordeal. I can't blame Christianity for his over zealous evangelism. He mentioned all what he perceived as violence perpetrated by Islam across the globe, as if Bin Laden was my cousin! He even included those areas where Muslims are unquestionably the victims like Bosnia apparently out of ignorance. He asked me this question.

'Have you seen the Saudi Arabian flag',

'Yes I have'.

'What is prominent on it isn't it a crossed sword?'

'Yes the sword and other objects, I have noticed' 'What does it tell you about the Muslim mentality?'

I replied,

'Have you realized that even with the crossed sword as a symbol, Saudi Arabia has never hurt even a fly in her history when nations with crosses as their symbol have waged war all across the globe in the past 500 years completely wiping out some nations and tribes. What do you make out of this fact?'

This intervention allowed him to attend to my problem but not until he had given me a package of literature expounding Christian emphasis on love. As if Dick Cheney Tony Blair and George Bush were not aware of Christian 'love'. (Dick Cheney is said to be Jewish)

MUSLIM VICTIMS IN EUROPE

The break-up of Yugoslavia gave birth to civil war in the former republic. Nationalism, ethnic prejudices and religious intolerance combined to unleash the worst atrocities in post-communist Europe. The worst massacre in Europe since World War II took place in Srebrenica, an enclave under the protection of the United Nations. In three nights Serb Nationalists who are orthodox Christians led boys above ten and all the men to the slaughterhouse. The United Nations determined that 8000 Muslims under their protection were shot in cold blood. The Serbs calculated that nobody sympathized with Muslims and in fact the Bosnian Serb leadership boasted that they were sure nobody wanted Muslims in Europe therefore they were at liberty to eliminate them. Ethnic Cleansing found its way in modern vocabulary due to the situation in former Yugoslavia and the massacres in Rwanda.

For the first time on record the Serbs actively pursued the rape of girls and women as a weapon of war in Europe. The victims were Bosnian Muslims. Never before has the world witnessed such a horrible situation. The Serbs miscalculated.

Let all of us here remember that, NATO led by the United States did go to war against the Serbs for their atrocities against the people of Bosnia and Kosovo who are mostly Muslims.

It is quite clear to me that the United States basically has nothing against Muslims, **what they pursue is their strategic political and economic interests. These interests may not necessarily be in harmony with the aspirations of individual Muslim countries by chance not by design.** The proof to this is that some of the staunchest allies of the United States for the past fifty years have been very conservative Muslim States like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the cradle and center of Islam. America and Islam therefore are not doomed to be enemies. The United States is the only super power now. It needs a lot of oil to run its economy. Oil is a strategic asset to her and this is a prime consideration for its foreign policy not morality or truth. Most of this oil happens to be under Muslims. Therefore the U.S will always be engaged one way or the other with the Muslim countries in the foreseeable future at least until a new source of energy replaces the cheap oil. Like a hungry cat, which smells the meat, it will always go after it. The meat has no religion so is the oil that the United States need for her industry.

So why would the United States pander to Israel threatening her oil supplies. This limited work does not allow us to tackle this very complex issue. Sufficient for now is to say that she believes that the Jewish state is a more reliable ally which can always act as a policeman and a threat to those who may not be willing to be friendly to Uncle Sam and especially to keep away the communists from the oil wells during the bi-polar world. The few utterances of some generals in the U.S. Army and some Christian fundamentalists should not alarm the Muslims. The U.S. will go to war to secure its oil supplies, she will not wage war for Christ. The Crusaders in the past centuries were largely not successful they cannot be successful now. The United States is well aware of this.

CONCLUSION

Those of us who find ourselves in the leadership role among the Muslims have a responsibility to educate our people that violence bloodshed and terrorism in the Middle East and elsewhere is a serious

threat to the image of the chosen Religion of Allah for mankind. In the Middle East the Palestinians have a just cause. It is just a matter of time. The United States cannot continue to support the appalling injustice forever. Sooner than later, the fine men and women in the United States will begin seriously questioning their half a century of unqualified bankrolling of Israel. Already Europe has taken the lead. In a recent poll the overwhelming number of Europeans believed that Israel is the greatest threat to the peace of the world and not the Palestinians. Let us help the men and women in the U. S. with the sense of justice to help change the situation in the Middle East by opposing violence, which only helps the warmongers who wrongly believe that they can keep a whole people in subjugation and humiliated forever. Let the Palestinians also be generous, like the Black South Africans by allowing the Jews also "to live and let live"

Before September 11, the fastest growing Religion in the U.S. was Islam; this incident arrested the trend even if temporally. Terrorism is not in our interest. Kidnapping of foreign nationals does not help Islam in any way. On the contrary the Holy Quran clearly admonishes us, Muslims to give protection to foreigners and offer refuge even to idolaters who were at that time bent on destroying Islam.

'And if any of the idolaters seek refuge with thee, give him protection so that he may benefit from the words of Allah. Then send him safely to his destination. This is because they are people who have no knowledge' Holy Quran Ch 9:6

Is this not contrary to what Abu Sayaaf is doing in Mindanao! Kidnapping any American who comes their way?

It is time for us to practically demonstrate to the skeptical world that Islam is indeed peace.

The world media is scaring people with Islamic terrorism and so called Islamic fundamentalism. The media does not see the contradiction in the fact that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the most conservative and fundamentalist of Muslim countries are staunch allies of the West.

One wonders why apparently people who are now well informed about Islam, at least they know from history that killing of innocent

people has never been the teaching or practice of Muslims, have coined this strange attribute for Islam, and propagated it so much that Islam has become the other name for terrorism.

Islam, it is alleged is the Religion that was spread with the sword. People have fantasy of Muslim hordes holding sword in one hand and the Quran in the other telling people around the world to choose either of the two: Quran or sword (Islam or war). This fallacy has been repeated so much that people have taken it for granted to be true. Most probably when some people dream of Islam they most certainly see the sword as well.

Prominent non-Muslim scholars after carefully going through the pages of history have decisively destroyed the false tales, which are the results of medieval ignorance and biased assessment. A few quotations here should suffice, in his extraordinary book "Islam at Crossroads" page 8 De L. O'Leary writes:

"History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of sword upon conquered races is one of the most absurd myths that historians have ever repeated."

Another author a Hindu scholar, the editor of the Sat Updaish, wrote:

'Some people say that Islam was preached by the sword, but we cannot agree with this view. What is forced on people is soon rejected. Had Islam been imposed on the people through oppression, there would have been no Islam today. Why? Because the Prophet of Islam had spiritual power, he loved humanity and he was guided by the ideal of ultimate good.'

(Murder in the Name of Allah, p.16).

JIHAD - HOLY WAR

Jihad literally means striving, struggling and making an effort to achieve something. It means putting ones' self under stress. Since fighting in self defense involves struggling, striving and severe stress it has been called jihad in this context otherwise the word for war or

fighting is *qitaal* or *harb* not Jihad, There are three kinds of Jihad known to the Muslims. We have the greater Jihad, the great Jihad and the lesser Jihad (Jihad Akbar, Jihad Kabir and Jihad Asghar). The greater Jihad, according to the Holy Prophet of Islam is striving against one's own weakness. It is reported that the Holy Prophet on return from war said we have returned from a lesser Jihad (war) to a greater Jihad i.e. self control, discipline and restraint. The great Jihad is preaching the message of Allah and calling people to good and the lesser Jihad is fighting in the cause of Allah, not to force people to accept a religious concept or ideology but self-defense.

It is reported that a young man approached.

Islam only allows the war fought to protect freedom of conscience and protection from the destruction of Mosques, Churches, Synagogues and also defend ones life, property and nation.

Any war apart from this is not Jihad and apart from Jihad Islam does not permit any other type of war.

WHY MUSLIMS HAD TO FIGHT

Early Islamic history is admittedly connected with war. But the mere fact that a nation or community has to fight does not mean that nation or community is a warmonger or aggressor. Many of our Islanders had to fight on many occasions to prevent black-birders from enslaving them. Some fought to protect their territories and freedom. No sane person will charge these brave islanders as bloodthirsty and war mongers even though apparently they chose not to apply the teaching "turn the other cheek" when attacked.

The early Muslim suffered terribly at the hands of the Meccan pagans. Some were tortured, some murdered and most of them became refugees.

Finally the Holy Prophet of Islam himself had to migrate under Divine guidance when the Meccans planned to kill him. Even after migration the Pagans did not leave the Muslims alone to worship in a manner they wished. The Pagans on their part were not satisfied with

driving the Muslims out of their homes. They followed them in refuge, to destroy them with war.

At this point Allah gave the Muslims the permission to fight back.

"Permission to fight is given to those, against whom war is made because they have been wronged - and Allah indeed has the Power to help them".

Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said,

"Our Lord is Allah" - and if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty." (Holy Quran 22:40-41).

It is interesting to note that Muslims are commanded to fight intolerance and fight to establish the freedom of religion for all, Christians, Jews and other non-Muslims. The first battle fought with the pagans under the command of God quoted above ended in a defeat and disgrace for the superior pagan army.

The following year the Pagans attacked again to avenge their defeat. This battle known as the Battle of Uhud ended in heavy casualty on the Muslim side. Seventy Muslims from among the precious few at the time became martyrs defending their freedom of conscience. At Uhud the Muslims suffered but were not defeated. The Meccans decided that it was possible to finish the Muslims therefore they gathered the Arabian tribes into a huge army to deliver coup de'grace on Islam.

This was a terrible and trying moment for the Muslims. Their only hope against these impossible odds was Allah the Almighty. This great attempt led by the Meccan Pagan Chiefs also ended up in a painful failure for them.

These are facts of history, which is not denied even by enemies of Islam. War was forced on the Muslims; it was never the Muslims who waged war to win converts as preached by some pastors across the

Pacific. After the third attempt to destroy the Muslims which nearly succeeded, had it not been for the timely intervention of God, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) decided that from then on they would not sit down to be attacked. If they had to fight, the war had to be fought in the enemy territory.

The enemy had cornered the Muslims three times. The Muslims faced grave danger from Pagan attacks. Even though the Meccans never gave up their aims of destroying Islam they were never given the chance to launch attacks on Medina the refuge of the Muslims again.

THE CONQUEST OF MECCA

The Holy Prophet Muhammad signed a peace treaty with the Meccans known as the Treaty of Hudaibiyya. Even though some of the provisions of this treaty were clearly humiliating to the Muslims, the Prophet accepted it, as it was the only way to bring about peace. He clearly did not wish to go to war.

Once again the Meccans broke the provisions of the peace treaty by attacking a tribe allied to the Muslims. The tribe asked the Prophet to fulfill his treaty obligation by coming to their aid. In one of the greatest and finest conquest in history 10,000 Muslims marched on Mecca and took with it with almost no bloodshed.

A non-Muslim orientalist, Stanley LanePoole writes about the Holy Prophet's conduct on the occasion

"The day of Muhammad's greatest triumph over his enemies was also the day of his grandest victory over himself. He freely forgave the Quraish all the years of sorrow and cruel scorn to which they had inflicted him, and gave an amnesty to the whole population of Mecca. (Murder in the Name of Allah, p.36).

After the defeat of the Meccans there was another major battle with another Arabian tribe before Muslims could finally practice their faith in peace.

It is quite true that Islam was involved in wars from its beginning but it is more important truth to bear in mind that war was forced on the

Muslims. Unlike the Jews who had to wage war and destroy people so that they could inherit their land according to the Bible, Muslims are not permitted to undertake such an adventure. Soon after the defeat of the principal centre of idol worship in Arabia, all the Arabian tribes joined the newly created Islamic state one by one.

However, this situation did not imply that the Muslim state was recognized or allowed freedom and political independence. The super-powers of the time Persia and the Romans who occupied parts of Arabian land each looked contemptuously at the emerging Muslim state. The Iranian King who had a nominal power over Arabia ordered the arrest of the Holy Prophet. The ruler of Yemen who was deputized to carry on this order sent the police to arrest the Prophet accordingly. When the Prophet was told of the mission of the Police he told them to wait for his answer. The following day the prophet told the Yemen party that the King of Iran who issued the arrest warrant was dead. God had informed the Prophet.

Later a new bearer came with a new order canceling the warrant of arrest. The King's own son had killed him.

Byzantine and the Persians all looked for a chance to push the new Islamic state under water. The prospect of the barbarian Arabs emerging as a power appealed to no one, but they were barbarians no more. The fine teachings of Islam had turned them into high moral and spiritual nation in a remarkably short time.

Clash with the Islamic state was therefore imminent. This started during the latest part of the Holy Prophet's life but the real battles took place after his death, which ended in total defeat of both the Byzantinians and the Persians.

It is quite true that the Islamic state after successfully defending itself fought the enemies' right into their territories to crush them once for all. But we must remember that the enemies were then defeated temporary and not broken. It would have been foolish on their part to allow the enemies to regroup and attack later with more determination.

In the second world war the Allies did not content themselves with defending their territories and repelling Germany and Japanese

aggression, even after successfully repelling them they were not satisfied until they had totally crushed Japan and Germany. The 'Christian' U.S. even dropped Atomic weapons to make sure Japan is totally devastated and humiliated. For the Muslims it was the matter of survival. The threatening powers over the Muslims, hovering like the sword of Damocles had to be broken before they could hope to breath and worship in freedom, and this was exactly what they did.

The Muslims were not fighting to convert nations into Islam as it has generally been said. It is on record that when war could not be avoided the Muslims invited their enemies to become brothers by accepting Islam. If the people did not wish to join, they freely had the option of submitting to the rule of the Muslims and in lieu for Muslims protection they had to pay a minimum tax. Once they agreed to pay this tax known as Jizya the Muslims had no right over them whatsoever. The people enjoyed total freedom of faith, belief and other human rights. Remember that Moses never offered such conditions to the people he met in Canaan. Forcing people to become Muslims with the sword has never been the aim or practice of Muslims.

Remember that Muslims ruled Spain for over 700 centuries, if it was true that Muslims forced people to join their faith what could have prevented them from forcing Spain into Islam in all these 700 years. After the total defeat of the Christian forces in Spain if the Muslims had vigorously embarked on forceful conversion, the Christians could never have regrouped and gained power later. Muslims never practiced inquisition or similar forceful assimilation in Spain. Nor do Muslims have teachings similar to Biblical.

"And when thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them, thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them. Neither shalt thou make marriages with them, thy daughters thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt not take unto thy son". (Deut. 7:203).

Some Muslim writers have blamed Muslim Spain for being too tolerant and liberal which ultimately resulted in their expulsion from Spain. It is however wrong to blame Muslim Spain. The very idea of forcing defeated populations into Islam is just not the way of Islam.

The Holy Quran clearly states:

"Admonish, therefore, for thou art but an admonisher. Thou hast no authority to compel them." (Ch. 88:22-23)

"Verily, this is a Reminder. So whoever wishes, may take a way unto his Lord." (Ch. 76:30)

"There should be no compulsion in Religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong;..."

(Ch. 2:257)

Later, when the Christians reconquered Spain, what happened to non-Christians in Spain is no secret. The inquisition is one of the most barbaric chapters in the history of any religion. Even Christians who differed with the official version of Christianity were executed. Millions of innocent people lost their lives under the supervision and with the blessings of Christian Clergymen. One wonders how could someone forget this and turn around to accuse Islam of blood letting.

India is another Spain¹. If Muslims used force to convert people into Islam what prevented the Muslims from converting India during the 1000 years rule? Did the Muslim Indian rulers fail miserably in their religious responsibility? Even in one thousand years?

In many cases the native inhabitants facilitated and assisted the Muslims in taking over their country. Egypt is a good example. The Copts welcomed the Muslims against their fellow Christian Greek masters. In the long history of Muslim domination there surely might have been excesses here and there but the fact is, true and objective history has recorded that Muslims treated their non-Muslims in a more humane and magnanimous manner especially in respect of the freedom of worship.

¹The difference is that the Hindu Majority has been generally more tolerant to Muslim and Christian Minorities after they regained power from the Muslims through the British. Even though there are communal riots here and there in India there has been nothing like the Spanish Christian inquisition in India. The government is committed to secularism. This fine record is now under serious threat from Hindu fundamentalists.

Many a time the Muslims paid dearly for their tolerance. One of the greatest calamity which befell Islam, the murder of Umar the Great, second successor of the Holy Prophet was carried on by a non-Muslim slave. Isn't it ironical that it is alleged that Muslims were conquering and forcing people to become Muslims in far away lands while in their very midst they could not make even their slaves Muslims! So much so that a non-Muslim slave was able to assassinate the powerful Muslim head of the state!

Presently the largest Muslim country in the world is Indonesia (200 million people). About 94 percent of Indonesians are Muslims. The world would like to know which Muslim swordsman converted Indonesia or Malaysia. Like many parts of the world, Indonesia got their Islam from Muslim Merchants and travellers.

THE PROBLEM OF THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East has been a battlefield as far as human history goes. Bloodshed is nothing new there. These days Hizabullah, Islamic Jihad, Israel, the P.L.O. are all parties to the bloodshed in this remarkable piece of the earth. The Middle East nevertheless has also contributed more than any part of the world to moral and spiritual advancement of the world. Almost all the known prophets of God came from this region.

The first records we have of fighting in the Middle East are according to the Bible, when Abraham waged war against the tribal Chiefs of this area. Genesis Chapter 14: 3-4.

'For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him.' Hebrew 7:1

Archeology may put it much earlier, since the Bible is mostly interested in "God's Chosen people" Israelites and matters associated with them, what happened in these lands before Abraham and when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt including wars that might have taken place is not recorded. After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and entered Sinai, the History of the Middle East was that of war, massacres and total genocide. The Christian academic may not

criticize the conduct of the Israelites because his Bible clearly tells him that Jehovah, Lord God of Israel commanded Israel to enter those lands, empty it for the Israelites by massacring every one and enslaving others. (Deut. 20:10-20).

If other people had committed these acts and quoted their own scripture the pastors would have filled the shelves of libraries throughout the world with barbarism monstrosity, sadism etc. of other "heretical" faiths.

Jesus said: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what ye measure, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in their brother's eye but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine eye, and then thou shall see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye". (Matt. 7: 1-6).

The above quoted sermon of Jesus should sober up those who only see violence with Muslims.

One marvels whether the Pastors who accuse Muslims of terrorism and bloodshed think of their own history, the beam in their own eyes. The Israelites finally occupied the Promised Land but the remnants of other nations around rose again and again, sometimes defeating the Israelites but in most cases the Israelites overcame them. Finally, other powers from the Middle East totally defeated the Israelites and carried them en-masse into slavery, however even these pagan victorious powers did not apply the same rule used by the Israelites, they were not totally massacred. The Israelites recovered again and again but it is a fact that the modern P.L.O. is not responsible for the woes of the Jewish people. The Diaspora was a result of Jewish rebellion, which was totally crushed with terrible human suffering to the Israelites. The Romans made sure the Jews were dispersed away from their homeland. They scattered Israelites remained wandering people for nearly 2000 years till a new Jewish state was created by the British in the midst of the Palestinians with the support of the great powers amidst the bitter protest of the Palestinians and the Arabs.

The Jews had suffered too much. After the Romans dispersed them they migrated all across the Middle East and later Europe. The Christians, after the Romans, seized every opportunity to harass them. They suffered the most in the inquisition. The worst came during Hitler's rule in Germany, millions of Jews were murdered. Just to remind you, Hitler was neither a Muslim nor Hitler's Germany an Islamic state. Germany is still classified as an European Christian country!

After the Second World War, the world powers led by Britain carved out part of the Arab Palestine for the Jews to go and settle as their homeland. The reason was that historically, it belonged to them based on Biblical records. Let us not enter into the merits and demerits of these arguments here. The important point is that a new state called Israel was imposed on the Palestinians against their will by outside powers.

Soon the Palestinians became dispossessed of their lands, sometime by outright seizure and sometimes through buying from the poor people who were not fully aware of the consequence of what was happening. The Palestinians found that they had become aliens in their own land and the aliens have become the landlords.

People who have never lost their lands cannot comprehend this situation. What was done by the world powers with good intention but stupid logic became the seed planted, which was later to grow and blossom, not into what the planters visualized but bloodshed, wars and hatred. Israel and the Palestinians case is a sad result of misplaced sentimentality. 'The road to hell is paved with good intentions' so the saying goes.

Israel might have been a natural state 3000 years ago when indeed 'might was right'. It is certainly an artificial state now, though I am not calling for its destruction. Not at all, many states in Africa and the world have artificial borders, which have no geographical logic, but they are recognized as independent states. The same applies to Europe.

The tragedy is that in Israel's case, her neighbours have not willingly accepted her, if they are totally helpless to do anything about Israel now; it is because of Israel's massive military power guaranteed by

the world's most powerful nation, the U.S.A. But no power is permanent or everlasting. History has guaranteed that. It is in her interest for Israel not to depend on her present military, might which may not last for the next 50 years. Israel should win acceptance through compromise conciliation and moderation while yet she has the upper hand.

The Arabs who fought three wars with Israel were defeated totally but the defeat of the Arabs has not brought peace to the Middle East nor is it likely to. The Palestinians, more bitter after the wars failed to solve their problem, resorted to terrorism.

I am not justifying their terrorism in any sense but every sane person would agree that a desperate person is likely to act irrationally or violently.

The Palestinians mostly happen to be Muslims but their war against Israel is not a Religious war. In reality Christians and Jews deprived of their land behaved in the same manner. It should not be given a Religious label but a political one. Which, surely it is. In the seventies when the Palestinians hijacked airlines and blew them up, they were not doing so because they were following the teachings of Islam or the Holy Quran. They were acting as people deprived of their homeland. They wanted the world to take notice of their fate and act. Too bad for them that this act of desperation caused more harm to their cause than good. Terrorism does not win friends it creates enemies.

THE SHARIAH

IS SHARIAH AMPUTATION OF LIMBS AND STONING TO DEATH ONLY

Pakistan, Sudan, Nigeria and some few Muslim countries have been in the headlines recently for the sentencing of thieves to amputation and convicted adulterers to be stoned to death. The Mullahs in Pakistan especially during the dictatorship of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq made a lot of noise about Islamic Shariah and started the flogging of drunkards in public and cutting of the hands of thieves and robbers ignoring completely the responsibility of the state under Shariah for

compassion towards the weak and needy and the creation of a welfare system that eliminated the excuses for stealing generally. Dictators will always highlight punishment and pay lip service to their responsibilities. That is how Shariah got a bad name as if it is all about the cutting of limbs and stoning to death!

An unmarried woman, a divorcee in Northern Nigeria became pregnant. Since at that time she was not in a legal wedlock, the Mullahs in Nigeria sentenced her to death by stoning. These cases quickly climbed to the headlines in electronic and print media. BBC CNN and all other global networks followed the case at prime time. Italy and some nations gave the lady asylum. Is Islam not a frightening religion many people started asking. A friend in one of the islands said 'let us pray that Shariah does not reach here'.

So what is Shariah?

Shariah in a plain language simply means; a path, a way of doing things. In religious terminology it means the code of conduct for Muslims, which includes the penal code. Shariah is therefore not just the cutting of the hands of thieves. Shariah indeed gives guidance on fasting, charity, good conduct, family life, rules of inheritance, proper methods of worship, regulation of inter human relations, and all matters relating to man's relation to man and to his Creator.

Like Jihad, the minutest part has taken the centre stage completely eclipsing the fine code of conduct for Muslims, which is essentially the Shariah.

Muslims borrowed the amputation of the hands of the thieves and robbers and the execution of the adulterer and adulteress from the Biblical teaching prior to the revelation of the Islamic penal code*. In the formative age of Islam when the Islamic law or Shariah was not completed, the Holy Prophet Muhammad adopted the Biblical practice of the earlier prophets. As the Holy Prophet received the Islamic teachings on any given matter he adopted it in place of the Biblical one. Yes during his lifetime adulterer and adulteress were stoned to death in accordance with this principle. Later the revelation in Suratu Nnoor Holy Quran Ch 24:3 replaced this punishment. The punishment prescribed by the Holy Quran is one hundred strokes of

cane, which is not meant to kill or inflict permanent injury. This is the true Shariah. The stoning to death was borrowed from Moses. It has been returned to the owner as and when Muslims received their own code. If the owners do not like it now, in this secular age, that is fine with us.

The Bible also insists that homosexuals, when caught must also be stoned to death. I am sure the Churches who are busily ordaining openly gay priest wish these passages could be removed from the Holy Scriptures. Apparently God did not consider unorthodox sexual preference among human rights!

With regards to the stoning of the adulterer and adulteress some Muslim clerics unfortunately do not take into account the Islam's own way of dealing with it and insist that once the prophet ordered this on one or two occasions they will enforce it now no matter the circumstances.

The stoning to death of those who commit adultery is not, never found in the constitution of Islam, the Holy Quran.

Stoning to death is not a lenient punishment granted. The Bible first introduced it*. The crucial question is; was this law given to Moses by God. If it is true that it originated from God then does it mean that the God of Israel is also cruel? Or are we more merciful than God! If we single out this punishment as a fabrication by Moses himself due to its harshness then what is the guarantee that all other laws in the Torah are not the fabrication of Moses himself.

The Christian evangelist has a ready answer, Christ came to abolish Moses*, and he died to atone for all sins including adultery and robbery. Fine, then the Christian society will have to forgive the armed robbers and those who destroy homes due to adultery always and say to them '*go and sin no more*' since Christ never prescribed imprisonment or alternatives.

Islam did prescribe amputation for habitual thieves and armed robbers. The Bible has this to say.

'A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft.'

Exodus 22; 3'

The Biblical punishment is certainly not more lenient than the Islamic prescription is it?

The philosophy of punishment generally is beyond the scope of this work. Let us remember for now that the apparently 'harsh' amputations has actually saved many more lives which otherwise would have been lost in armed robberies not to mention billions lost in thefts. Statistics clearly vindicates the Islamic punishment.

In Saudi Arabia for example where amputation is in force, armed robbery and theft is hardly a social problem. One lost limb of the criminal is an effective deterrent that is saving hundreds of lives of the innocent and otherwise victims of robbery. Sometimes we use our hearts more than our brains. Admittedly, it is human and natural also that we should truly feel sad for anyone who has to undergo this punishment. Allah more than the loving parent is never pleased when a punishment has to be inflicted even for the necessary good of the society.

It is also very important to remember that Islam allows the amputation only of the hardened and unrepentant thieves, the one who becomes a terror to the society. There is no amputation for stealing food and minor items. This punishment is also not applicable during famine and hard times. *The suspension of this punishment in such situation is also indeed part of the feared Shariah.* In America people just shoot the thieves and robbers if they have the opportunity to do so. No one calls such people cruel and the law protects such people. Tough measures to deter crime should not be confused with cruelty.

Lev 20:10-12

Jesus was emphatic that he had not come to abolish the law but fulfill Mat. 5;17

LEBANON

The Lebanese are also Arabs but not all Arabs are Muslims. Half of the Lebanese are Christians and half Muslims. The Lebanese shared power between them politically without terrorism until quite recently. Lebanon is a victim of the Palestinian tragedy and Israel militarism.

The Arabs were defeated in 1967 and the Palestinian West Bank was also annexed by Israel, totally depriving them of a free homeland. Many of them found refuge in Jordan. In the 70's the Jordanians felt over burdened by the influx of Palestinians and forced them out. They found another refuge in Lebanon, disturbing the delicate balance between the Lebanese people.

From Lebanon the Palestinians continued their attacks on Israel. The Israelites always mounted a massive retaliation. The indiscriminate Israeli retaliation was geared towards compelling the Lebanese to throw out the Palestinians, but this did not work so Israel invaded Lebanon expelled the Palestinians and occupied southern Lebanon. This was a mistake for which Israel paid dearly and continues to pay.

In Lebanon the Israel rough tactics added more enemies to the already friendless state, the local Lebanese Shia's. The powerful Israel army has been successful in combating Palestinian terrorism, many a time with initiating terrorism of their own. The naked fact is, it was Jewish groups not the Palestinians who initiated terrorism in the Middle East

No one should deceive themselves Israel actually uses terror tactics when it fits in her offensive/defensive plans.

In this terrorism and counter terrorism the Palestinians have suffered hundred times what Israel has suffered. One such example was when a Lebanese Christian group trained, equipped, financed and encouraged by Israel burst into a Palestinian refuge camp and massacred over 1200 innocent Palestinian women and children. With the exception of the resignation of the Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, Israeli public outrage and few demonstrations Israel got away with it but there is no way Israel can pretend innocence. The Palestinians have carried out similar attacks but nothing on such magnitude. The hijacking of school buses and the innocent Israeli

Athletes hostage drama during Olympic Games in Munich which ended in sad killing of the Israelis and the hijackers is also a proof to how terrible things the Palestinians are prepared to do. Surely Olympic Games are not the place to show one's desperation.

The Israelites occupied Lebanon for many years but the enemy made was prepared to face the Israeli Army even with shotguns. The Israelis made the Shias more fanatical. Soon groups mushroomed in Southern Lebanon whose hatred for Israel made them experts in bombing and dying for their cause.

Powerful Israel could not stand it any more and had to withdraw. Apart from God there is no absolute power. An international peace keeping force led by the U.S.A replaced them. To these Shia groups, which came into being due to Israeli invasion of Lebanon, there was no difference between Israel and U.S.A. In the absence of Israeli troops the U.S.A. peacekeeping force became "Israel". In a suicide attack 250 U.S. marines were killed. The U.S. hastily withdrew. Later a bomb exploded near the house of one of the Shia leaders, Sheikh Fadhlallah, and 68 people died. The Israeli Intelligence unlike the Shia is not proud or quick in taking responsibility for their terrorism or "counter terrorism, terrorism". They just kept quiet; the French also suffered 50 casualties and quickly retreated.

It is an irrefutable fact that our newsmakers are obviously pro Israel Western journalist. Objectivity and impartiality have never been taken seriously in the Israeli Palestinian problem. In 1990 a bloody Christian Muslim fight in engulfed Beirut. It was said that Christians were defending themselves against a combined Muslim-Syrian attempt to crush them. But informed people know that it was a political and constitutional crisis that had brought about this latest bloodshed. One should remember that the main financial supplier to General Aoun's Christian forces in Beirut was the Muslim Iraq the same Saddam Hussein not the Vatican. Nowhere has the religion been misused for political objectives like the Middle East.

THE LEBANESE SHI'AH

As recent as 1980 the Lebanese Shi'a were never counted as terrorists. They were not even known or mentioned in the local media

or Middle East news, not to talk of international news. Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah, Oppressed of the Earth are all newly formed groups. They owe their birth and fanaticism to Palestinians entering Lebanon as armed refugees firstly, but most certainly the Israeli army occupation of their land and rough tactics against the civilian Shia is the real cause of Shia fanaticism - not Islam, their religion.

The proof to this fact is that since Ehud Barak the last Prime Minister of Israel pulled out the Israeli forces from Lebanon there is peace. No one is kidnapped all is quiet and we hear of terrorism no more at least from Lebanon. Let the Israelis withdraw from all occupied land totally and Hamas and Islamic Jihad will vanish from the headlines

One is tempted to recall the withdrawal of Israel from Gaza a few years ago and the continuous firing of rockets by Hamas from Gaza into Israel as an evidence that Hamas can never be placated. This is only part of the fact. After the withdrawal Israel continued to attack and assassinate members of Hamas anytime anywhere they chose in Gaza and elsewhere. A crippling blockade was imposed on Gaza. Certainly Israel was not less guilty than Hamas to strangle and cripple them

If the impression given to the world that Islam is terrorism and terrorism in Islam is true, why was it that before Israel occupation, the Shias who have been Muslims for centuries never kidnapped a single Westerner or took any hostage from the numerous Americans, British, French citizen etc who lived in Lebanon. Have the Shias now suddenly discovered that terrorism and hostage taking is an essential part of their faith?

The term Islamic terrorism is as misleading a phrase as Christian terrorism, American terrorism, British terrorism, or Fijian terrorism. Islamic terrorism, American terrorism or Christian terrorism means Fiji, Islam, America or Christianity officially sanctions and encourages terrorism as a fundamental principle, which is not the case.

The fact that the Shias in Lebanon chose to use the holy name of Islam as a motivating factor in their acts against Israel and her allies does not make Islam responsible for their acts. It is clearly the name of Islam misused.

Christian soldiers in Europe sometime obtained blessings from the priests before embarking on wars. The Russian army in the 1st world war obtained blessings from their priestly clad clergymen but the media did not coin the Russian Army as "Christian fighters".

Muslim Iran has been the staunchest ally and friend of the U.S.A. and the West until a revolution overthrew the Shah, the friend of West. After the revolution the hated Shah and his friends especially his main supporters the U.S.A. became the target for all sorts of attacks because it was the U.S. particularly the C.I.A. which maintained and protected the repressive regime of the Shah. Suddenly the media turned and relabeled Iran from "Progressive" country to a Terrorist State.

The staunchly Muslim Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were the best friends of the Christian West against Godless Communist expansionism in the Middle East and South Asia. Tomorrow if Pakistan or Saudi Arabia for some reasons commit violent act the media will not broadcast Pakistan terrorism or Saudi terrorism. One will only hear Islamic terrorism.

The same treatment is not given to the other "terrorist" groups. The famous I.R.A. that nearly killed the British P.M. Mrs. Thatcher when they bombed the conservation party meeting in 1984, killing two M.P.s. Everyone knows that the I.R.A. is a Catholic organization but the people do not call the I.R.A. "Catholic terrorist" or "Christian terrorist". One wonders why the double standards.

Islamic terrorism is nothing but a concoction of the media. There is nothing like that. If such a thing existed no one could have lived in the world in peace. There are well over 1 billion Muslims, can the world live with 1.2 billion terrorists? Islam would have ceased to exist as a world religion if it was based on terrorism. "Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword", Jesus said.

The conflicts, killings, suffering and terrorism in the Middle East is political not religious. The name of Islam is only exploited. This fact is quite apparent for any man of understanding.

THE IRAN & IRAQ WAR

Two decades ago Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader of the Iranians persistently came to occupy the headlines of the world news. Shah Pahlavi's Iran was ripe for revolution. It needed a charismatic and radical leader. Ayatollah using the name of Islam was ready, he led the revolution. Like many revolutionists before him he committed many of the atrocities, which fueled the overthrow of his predecessor the Shah of Iran. Thousands of people of Iran were executed not due to Islam, but in spite of the fine teachings of Islam. At a point it seemed that the only punishment that existed in Iran was execution. Since the resemblance of proper trial was rare the world condemned the way the Iranian revolution was being carried out.

On the other hand the internal opponents of Ayatollah were not less ruthless. The communist and especially the leftist Mujahidden Khalq organized their own bombing and killing campaign, which eliminated many of the new Iranian leaders. Iran was a country in chaos. The world wondered who was worse the Ayatollah or the deposed Shah.

For the West the terrible events in Iran were a blessing in disguise. Had it not been the power and prestige of the Ayatollah the strategically important Iran would surely have become communist, a nightmare and a worse scenario for the West. A Russian base in Iran could have altered the whole balance of power in the Middle East. Since Islam is the most powerful protection against Atheist anti-God Communism, the West has always encouraged extreme conservatism Islam to check the advance of communism. General Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan was one such bride of Western politics. However in Iran's case the Ayatollah was not only anti-communists, eliminating them whenever they were found, he considered the U.S. as the real Satan, responsible for the woes of the world and an enemy to Islam. This impression was formed as a result of American maintenance and encouragement of the Shah of Iran's police state which promoted alien values contrary to Islam.

It is the same type of "fundamentalism Islam" the U.S. has been encouraging all along in the region. Too bad for them that this time, even before destroying the communists, it eliminated the Shah, the friend of U.S. and turned the heat on the U.S.

The Ayatollah came to power in the name of Islam. Unfortunately he supported all sorts of things in the holy name of Islam, which had nothing to do with the Religion Islam.

Just as Christ's name was used to kill thousands in Europe in the past centuries, it was alleged that the Iranians supported and financed terrorist acts especially against their crowned Satan the U.S.A. many a time in the name of Islam.

One of the direct results of the Iranian Revolution was the 8-year Iran-Iraq war. When Shah was in power Iran was the most powerful state in the Gulf armed to the teeth by the U.S.A. After the fall of Shah many of his top Generals were executed. The army was demoralized

Iraq seeing the disarray in Iran launched an attack to capture an area rich with oil claimed by Iraq. It was a mistake, which cost Iraq and Iran dearly. There is no doubt about it at all, Iraq started the war but Iran got most of the blame mostly because of the unpopularity of the Iranian leadership and also later due to their intransigent position in respect to international attempts to stop the war.

The Iraqi invasion united the Iranians; Ayatollah who might not have survived much long in power used the war to unite the people behind him. Iran gained the upper hand at one point but their rejection of all efforts even from the Islamic countries to stop the bloodshed cost them dearly. The Iraqis used chemical weapons with feeble international response. "Anything against the Ayatollah could not be too bad", the world seemed to be saying. U.S. congress feeble call for sanctions against Iraq for using chemical weapons came only when Iraq had achieved her aims after using chemical weapons to help drive the Iranians from the vicinity of Baghdad and obtaining a cease fire from the position of strength. Iran under pressure internally and externally had to accept a cease-fire. Ayatollah described the acceptance of the cease-fire "the taking of poison". Iran suffered greatly in this unprovoked war. Abadan and Khorromshar, important oil centers was reduced to rubble.

The terrible Iran-Iraq war was also described as part of Islamic bloodshed. Both are Muslim countries but the fact that it is not Islam that caused the war but oil and land politics, is not clearly identified,

thereby misleading the people. The media dramatized it as "usual Islamic war mongering." What a misrepresentation of the facts.

THE SALMAN RUSHDIE AFFAIR

In the eighties a novel written by an Indian-born British citizen called Salman Rushdie shook the whole world. The author chose to name his novel *The Satanic Verses*. The book under the veil of a novel used a highly slanderous and bad language to attack the character of the Holy Prophet of Islam. The book which should rather be called *The Satanic Book* inflamed Muslims and decent people all over the world. It was outrageous.

Ayatollah Khomeini who had already become notorious to the Western world made the fatal mistake of calling for the assassination of the author, Salman Rushdie. The West was therefore granted a golden opportunity to attack Islam as an intolerant and bloodthirsty religion. Governments all over Europe, the E.E.C. (now EU) and even some governments in the Pacific expressed their condemnation of the Ayatollah's call for the murder of Salman Rushdie. This call of the Ayatollah was certainly wrong and must not be accepted. The world will be worse off if such a path of justice and punishment is followed.

On the other hand the response of these governments is totally hypocritical. The fact that a highly slanderous attack has been made by Salman Rushdie on emotions of over one billion people of the world in all continents was ignored, only the call of the Ayatollah was given publicity. If these governments were honest they should have equally condemned the author and banned the book if the principle of mutual respect for all religions is anything worthy to them.

These countries proudly took the pious position of protecting freedom of speech, as if all what mattered in this world was the freedom of speech, and every other consideration must be suppressed in favour of freedom of speech. There is no honesty in this approach because Britain has a law on blasphemy and a blasphemer is punishable under English law. If a British citizen was to write similar filthy things about any of their respected leaders or say Jesus Christ,

the author could be punished. By their actions they are telling the world that they will not tolerate any attack on their revered personalities but an attack on the revered persons of Islam and other religions is a different matter. In the case of the latter what is important is freedom of expression. The dictates of honesty demands that while the call of the Ayatollah is strongly condemned, Salman Rushdie must equally be condemned in similarly strong terms, nothing less.

Whatever is in the merits of freedom of speech attempts to use the freedom to poison and cause bad feelings between people must be condemned especially the freedoms to slander and defame.

MUSLIM FANATICISM

There are nearly 50 independent Muslim countries in the world. Soon after this Salman Rushdie affair erupted, representative of all the Muslim states met in one of their usual summits in Saudi Arabia. The media conveniently ignored the fact that out of 47 countries represented, all but one, Iran refused to endorse the Ayatollahs call for the murder of Salman Rushdie and Ayatollah was promoted to represent Islam and Muslims all over the world. The other 46 Muslim nations were not so important!

The stand of other important Muslim leaders around the world rejecting the Ayatollah's call was also not given enough publicity so as to expose the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Muslims though highly provoked do not endorse murder at all. The Grand Mufti of "Al Azhar" which is probably the most prestigious Islamic institution disassociated himself and Islam from Ayatollah's call.

The Supreme Head, Imam of the respected Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat represented in over 120 countries in his numerous interviews and sermons openly and clearly disassociated Islam from such a response to this satanic book and its author.

In p. 177 of his book "Murder in the name of Allah" the Imam Jamaat Ahmadiyya at that time Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad of the blessed memory wrote:

"As far as Salman Rushdie is concerned, no sane person with any real knowledge of the Holy Quran can agree with Imam Khomeini that his death sentence is based on any Islamic injunction. There is no such punishment for blasphemy in the Holy Quran or in the Traditions of the Holy Prophet of Islam. Blasphemy against God is mentioned in the Holy Quran in the following words:

"And abuse not those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they, out of spite abuse Allah in their ignorance." (Ch 6:109)

No authorization has been granted to any man to inflict any punishment for blasphemy against God. The Jews committed blasphemy against Mary, the mother Christ.

This has been mentioned in the Holy Quran as follows:

"And for their disbelief and for their uttering against Mary a grievous calumny." (Ch. 4:151)

Again no punishment other than by God himself is prescribed. It is both tragic and deplorable that Imam Khomeini has thus inadvertently maligned Islam rather than defending it and has caused immense damage to the image of Islam in the free world.

The Imam of the Grand Mosque of Azhar, in Cairo has already discredited Imam Khomeini's edict, and I am certain that there are also many Shia Muslims who would disagree with Imam Khomeini in this instance.

Despite all this, it would be unjust if one were to ignore the real issue. I feel it is unfair, as some politicians and scholars have done, to condemn Khomeini only rather than Salman Rushdie, who has produced a book whose extreme language is deliberately offensive to the many millions of Muslims throughout the world. Nor is this all the book has helped to undermine peace between Muslims and Christians and, if one can judge from the comments in some letters to national newspapers, to have unleashed the forces of racial intolerance." unquote.

ISLAMIC LAW ON HERESY

Salman Rushdie was born a Muslim. However, he has spent most of his life in Britain. Like many immigrants to the West, he has been westernized to the extent of having very little regard for religion, not only Islam. His novel shows that he holds Revelation in contempt. Now let us examine what Islam prescribes for heresy or blasphemy.

The late world famous Muslim jurist Sir Mohammed Zafrullah Khan, former president of the World Court in Hague and President of U.N. General Assembly at one time describing apostasy in terms of the Holy Quran writes;

"Whoever turns back from his faith, that is to say, whoever, out of fear of the sword being unsettled by opposition, announces that he abjures Islam, is an apostate. In the idiom of Islam an apostate is not one concerning whom someone else says that he has abjured Islam. There is no mention of any such person in the Holy Quran...."

Islam guarantees complete freedom of conscience and of belief. A disbeliever and a simple apostate stand in the same category; neither of them is liable to any penalty in this life. Were it otherwise, Islam would be accounted a faith that seeks to compel conscience, a vain and futile purpose, which is impossible of achievement. Compulsion might make people hypocrites, but cannot make them believers ... (Punishment of Apostasy in Islam).

An apostate must renounce Islam having once been a Muslim. On the authority of the Holy Quran, no non-Muslim can be forcibly converted to Islam and no Muslim can be forcibly declared a non-Muslim. Apostasy which is not aggravated by armed rebellion, treason or some other grave crime is only punishable by God (Holy Quran, 3:88-90). The Prophet, peace be on him, was directed not to exercise compulsion in matters of religion; he was only to warn and admonish (Holy Quran 50:46 & 88:22); he was not appointed a keeper or guardian over mankind, each person has the freedom to accept or ignore the message (Holy Quran 6:105-108 & 39:30-42); it was his duty to convey the message - God will call disbelievers to account (Holy Quran, 13:41). To arrogate the authority to kill another professed Muslim is a mortal sin (Holy Quran 4:94).

The Holy Quran unequivocally affirms every human being's right to freedom of conscience and faith. Islam is the only major religion to afford these freedoms on the basis of scripture alone. To do otherwise would be to abrogate the principle of free will. The Holy Quran states:

"If thy Lord had enforced His will surely all those on earth would have believed, without exception, wilt thou take it upon thyself to force people to become believers?" (10:100-101).

Until and unless Rushdie makes a declaration renouncing Islam, the title of apostate is probably inappropriate. If Rushdie does not after all share the same beliefs as Muslims, he might take a position alluded to in The Satanic Verses: "Where there is no belief, there is no blasphemy". Regardless, punishment for apostasy, according to the Holy Quran must not be inflicted by a human being - Therefore, the death sentence pronounced on Rushdie is not valid under Islamic law. According to the Holy Quran, the punishment for apostasy is to be cursed by God Almighty, the angels and by mankind. (Holy Quran 3:88-90).

As explained by Mr. Rashid Chaudhry, Press Officer for Ahmadiyya Muslim Association in London: If Islam is attacked by the lashing of tongues, we will reply with the lashing of tongues. If it is attacked by the sword, we will use the sword. Mr. Rushdie has chosen the weapon of the pen and we will defend ourselves similarly. ("Islamic Community Split Over Rushdie Affair," by Eileen Martin, Westerner, 6 April, 1989).

BLASPHEMY THE BIBLICAL VERDICT

The Christian's Holy Bible is quite clear on the punishment of blasphemy. The blasphemer must be executed. (Lev. 24:16).

If Salman Rushdie blasphemed then according to the Bible he must be executed. If there is a grain of faith left in the Christian leaders who joined the chorus of pious indignation against Ayatollah's call then this indignation and condemnation is very strange indeed. We have to ask them whether in this our age, Biblical teaching is barbaric or no more valid. They cannot have it both ways i.e. preach

to the world that the Bible is the sole source of salvation and also reject the teachings of the Bible when it does not conform to their new secular standards. Even Jesus Christ was ready to forgive only the blasphemy against him personally "Son of man". He categorically stated that blasphemy against God should never be forgiven. The punishment in this world must be enforced. (Matt. 12: 30-31)

The dilemma now for everyone is Salman Rushdie is a Muslim who committed the crime of blasphemy. There is no worldly punishment for him so far as Islam is concerned. But Salman Rushdie committed the crime in the United Kingdom, a Christian State that clearly has a worldly punishment for blasphemy.

The Muslims may be right in demanding punishment for Salman Rushdie according to the laws of the United Kingdom. Muslims, individually or collectively cannot go beyond that by enforcing Biblical law on a man who has committed blasphemy but still shouting that he has not renounced Islam.

If there is any punishment at all to be enforced by men, authorities in the country in which Salman Rushdie lives must be asked to take action not Muslims in far away lands like Iran. It is however clear that the best approach, which is the Islamic approach is to leave his fate in the hands of God.

May Allah, the Most High protect us all from actions, which may cause harm to our moral and spiritual well being.

CHAPTER TWO

REMOVING THE IMPEDIMENTS

People in the Pacific are so far away from the centre of Islam, geographically, politically and culturally. What seems to be the main impediment for the people here in accepting Islam is probably the cultural divide. Let us examine this cultural phenomenon.

CULTURAL PROBLEMS

Islam is a distinct religion culture and a way of life. It is not just a collection of beliefs. One has to "live" Islam. Sometimes one has to forgo a culturally and socially acceptable habit in one region or nation for the sake of Islam, if this acceptable social behaviour is incompatible with the teachings of Islam.

In Melanesia the pig plays an important part in the socio-economic make up of the society. It is used as a bride price, payment of compensation and for merchandise, and sometimes the main item for important feasts. The same applies to Polynesia to a lesser degree. Islam truly demands total abstinence from the culture of pork. Christianity faced the same problems in the early days. It solved this and other problems by compromising the clear Divine command on circumcision, eating of pork and the observance of the Sabbath. Even though Jesus and his disciples strictly observed the Mosaic Religious Culture, the elders after Jesus did amend some of these fundamentals to make the alleged religion of Jesus palatable, easy and acceptable to the foreigners. Christian preachers aware of this fact however find valid excuse for this amendment in the said dream or vision of Peter recorded in Acts 10:9-6.

'Even though there is no evidence that Peter who saw this vision and the disciples, used this as a valid permission to eat all prohibited animals and foods themselves, they later allowed the Gentile Christians to eat and drink according to their culture and social dictation. This fatal deviation however did not have an easy passage.

Peter and some few others supported the "brilliant" St. Paul who was the main advocate of this amendment but only after a stormy debate and stiff opposition from James who was actually the head of the infant church, Paul nevertheless won the day. A serious impediment in the way of the Gentiles becoming Christian was therefore removed. As already pointed out, circumcision, which was the vital sign of the covenant between God and Abraham, became no more important. This decision was finally made and conveyed to the Gentile Christians by the elders in the following words of the apostles.

Acts 15: 22-29. 'The letter to the Gentile Believers'

Then the apostles and the elders, together with the whole church, decided to chose some men from the group and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose two men who were highly respected by the believers, Judas called Barnabas, and Silas, and they sent the following letter by them "We, the apostles and the elders, your brothers send greetings to all our brothers of Gentile birth who live in Antioch, Syria and Cilica. *We have heard that some men who went from our group have troubled and upset you by what they said; they had not however, received any instruction from us. And so we have met together and have all agreed to choose some messengers and send them to you. They will go with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul, who have risked their lives in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We send you, then, Judas and Silas, who will tell you in person the same things we have written. The Holy Spirit and we have agreed not to put any other burden on you besides these necessary rules:

Eat no food that has been strangled; and keep yourselves from sexual immorality. You will do well if you take care not to do these things. With our best wishes.

This indeed was a revolutionary decision. Moses was "turned upside down" not by Jesus himself but by his Disciples,² The prime consideration here was *not to upset* the gentiles who wished to join the new sect, Christianity, but the Jewish Christians apparently didn't consider this amendment valid for themselves, therefore the church existed with two different groups of believers.

In the preface to Edward Gibbon's 'History of Christianity' the famous author has written.

"If Paganism was conquered by Christianity it is equally true that Christianity was corrupted by Paganism."

Once the disciples showed the way that the fundamentals of the faith could be amended or even changed by a few people or council of elders, the following generations were at liberty to do all sorts of things and bring all types of changes in Religion and this situation continues. Yesterday women were ordained as priest in some churches in spite of St. Paul's strong sermons to the contrary, After all if Paul himself could amend the Law of Moses the man of God, why can't Paul himself be amended to make women priests! Today, homosexuality, which is clearly an abomination in the scripture, the practice that invited Devine wrath and destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah, has now become a human rights issue. *As if God who created humans in the first place has no right to legislate on morality for man. Human rights are more important now than the rights of God.* If this situation has been the philosophy of neo-Darwinians or Marxists they could be excused. Some 'enlightened' Churches have accepted homosexuality as normal sexual preference even as some people prefer tall or short, fat or slim sexual partners of the opposite sex! Homosexuality has now moved from an undisputed sin and abomination to accepted social behaviour. In Europe homosexuals have gained the right to marry in the Church and live as married couple with all marital and inheritance rights.

² Jesus emphatically stated that he had not come to change the laws of Moses or the prophets before him Matt 5:17-20

America has gone a step further and ordained their openly gay priests in the Anglican Church. Only God knows what will follow next. To pave the way for such behaviour, some writers and film makers have even suggested that Jesus Christ himself was a homosexual! God forbid. The wickedness of modern man knows no limit. In the recent past one more sign of *human civilization* is the acceptance of people known as bi-sexual.

Islam did not produce visionary St Peters and "brilliant" St Pauls to effect changes in the fundamentals of the faith.

In Islam brilliant saints were only those who found solution for new situations within the fundamentals and principles of the faith without changing them. There were many of such men for example Imam Abu Hanifa and other doctors of Islamic law. Ibn Arabi, Imam Bukhari and many others

The Islamic logic on the point is that God Almighty has revealed a Perfect Religion suitable to all people in all cultures for all times. The Holy Quran completely covers the situations that might arise in different Lands. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) in his practical life as a prophet of God did not leave out any fundamental problem unsolved. Islam won some non-Arab people even during his lifetime and he did preach to other nations around him from Ethiopia, Egypt to Byzantium. He therefore left behind ample guidance for these nations for their expected acceptance of Islam.

The Muslim elders and scholars are therefore to seek for solution from the Holy Quran, and the teachings of the Holy Prophet for new situations if any, and not to frame new laws or amend the fundamentals.

Another important factor in this context is that in Islam the fundamentals are clearly defined beyond any argument by the Holy Prophet himself, there are five pillars of Islam and six articles of faith. Nobody or no group of people, however learned or saintly, may amend them.

One would find disagreement among Muslims as well, but these disagreements are almost wholly limited to non-fundamentals as in

case of Shia-Sunni Khilafat debate. The great Sunni-Shia Schism is basically on personalities not fundamentals of Islam. Of course in some cases idle minds turn minor and insignificant doctrinal differences into huge problems making mountains out of moles. This has been a serious problem within the Muslims. Sometimes the length of the trousers one should wear becomes the source of serious conflict! Despite this problem, Islam does not permit the amendment of its principles or the dilution of its fundamentals to make it easy for new converts to join. So then, what should be done about these cultural and dietary problems? Is Islam totally rigid and uncompromising? So how can we join such a religion!

The answer is within Islam itself. First and foremost Islam generally accepts all the good aspects of all diverse cultures and does not discourage any national culture or habit that does not run in conflict with spiritual and moral well being of man. Islam does not unnecessarily interfere in the legitimate happiness of the people. The prime concern of Islamic cultural, social and dietary laws is the moral physical and spiritual development of man

For example some people are found of singing, which forms important part of their culture. Islam does not seek to suppress this human emotion. It only seeks to guide the people in the use of this human faculty, as in some cases singing becomes instrumental for spreading ideas, which are harmful for the well being of the society. Islam will therefore seek to regulate and direct this quality of man. It directs this art in such a way as to benefit the people spiritually, morally and emotionally.

There are cases however in which Islam seeks to put an end to practices, which are impediments to the spiritual and moral progress of the community however such a practice or culture may be cherished by the society. In this case, unlike Christianity concession is not given, on the contrary the people are educated to sacrifice to win the pleasure of God however entrenched such a habit may be. And this is all what religion is about; self-sacrifice and the submission of ones desire in deference to the will and commands of God. Let us put it this way if the people of a certain Island are committed to pork, alcohol or cannibalism Islam won't compromise to allow the Islander to join but present the abandonment of these

habits as a challenge which must be overcome so as to project the society into superior moral and spiritual standards. Islam will explain that these habits are harmful and therefore must be rejected to win the love of God. This approach, has not, in any way impeded the progress of Islam in new Islands or areas.

When we say a Muslim must adopt an Islamic culture we simple mean that one should live his life in accordance with the commandments of Allah and follow the example of the Holy prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) who is an excellent model for mankind.

Islamic culture does not mean the imposition of a particular way of dressing or hairstyle for example, for the whole world. Islamic culture means decent dressing and this could be obtained with lava lava in the Pacific, Agbada in West Africa, Salwar Kamiz in the Indian subcontinent or trousers or dress in Europe.

From the cultural point of view there is no serious impediment in the way of the people to join Islam. On the contrary the spiritual enjoyment in Islam which is referred to as *HALAWATUL IMAN* is so sweet and satisfying that words may not amply, describe it, this strange spiritual enjoyment is much superior and beneficial than whatever one might have given up for the sake of his or her faith, Islam. People in all parts of the world have experienced this phenomenon.

Islam is therefore not, never an imposition of Arab or foreign culture on people. The Arabs on the contrary were people who have to give up so much of their culture to become Muslims. The fact is one of the greatest miracles of Islam was that it did transform the Arabs and adapted them to totally new culture called Islam. A people who took pride in all vices, adultery, infant killing and barbarous way of life were transformed into spiritual and moral educators of the world.

Islamic way of life should be much easier for many of our Islanders than the pre Islam Arabs. Considering the miracle called Islam that transformed the then uncivilized Arabs, there should be absolutely no impediment for other people in accepting Islam. The Islanders in the Pacific have nothing or very little to give away culturally to become Muslims.

Christianity must be commended in this context for not compromising on cannibalism when it entered the pacific islands two centuries ago.

"WE HAVE A RELIGION ALREADY"

Another objection often raised is we have a religion already, why should we consider a new religion. (This is not a stupid statement). People in all ages have asked this question and often strongly opposed new ideas and new prophets from God.

Sometimes people are confused as a result of tens of sects and denominations preaching different sermons from the same Bible. The result of this is that some say, I better stay with what I have inherited from my parents. The Holy Quran sums up this obstacle in these words...

"And when it is said to them, come to what Allah has revealed, and to the messenger; they say, 'sufficient for us is that wherein we found our fathers. What even though their fathers had no knowledge and had no guidance.

(Al-Maidah ;5:105)

The remark that what we inherited from our father is good enough for us is not a very pragmatic or sensible way of solving this problem.

This is the attitude of pagans during the time of the advent of prophets. Suppose the people of the islands kept to this attitude when Christianity was introduced to them a century and a half ago would our parents have been Christians, would we have inherited Christianity? If the Gentiles, Pagan Romans and Greeks had kept to this philosophy would Christianity have gone out of the confines of Judaism?

The Jews mostly adopted this attitude when Jesus preached his new message, they rejected him and continue to do so up till now, the result is that they have been deprived of the love of God and they have suffered terribly in the past two thousand years starting with the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus In 70 A.D. and one hopes that their

suffering has come to an end, with the terrible Nazi holocaust in the second world war.³

Therefore the fact is instead of the religion of our fathers being an impediment to the acceptance of Islam or the latest truth, religious history should encourage us to study Islam and accept it if we are convinced of its truthfulness. We should take lessons from the fate of the Jews and not hastily reject the new truth when we are presented with it.

It is a proven human nature to oppose new ideas and truth. Open the annals of world history, which true religion or prophet was accepted with festivity and celebration. Jesus Christ said sorrowfully; "A Prophet is accepted but in his own land". The Holy Quran confirming this attitude of mankind says, "Alas for My servants, there comes not a messenger but they mock at him". Holy Quran Ch:36-31.

TOO MANY RELIGIONS

Another impediment or excuse usually given is the proliferation of religions, sects and denominations. The problem is found in all religions. Among Muslims it seems that after so many sects they are exhausted. There has not been any major new sect for some decades now. Christianity, though older than Islam by 6 centuries has not lost her vitality for producing new sects.

In Africa and the Caribbean Christians "prophets" interpreting Christ are appearing in towns and villages, sometimes three or four prophets in the same town. Many people seek redress to their problems from Christ by the medium of these prophets including the endemic economic hardships. In the long run it is these prophets who come out economically better off not the seekers. These "prophets" often make lot of money from the congregation. There are too many denominations sects and religions all claiming to be the true way to God, each of them claims to have the monopoly over salvation.

³ Even now the immense military power they possess is not a guarantee to the end of their suffering, so far as they insist on the crucifixion of the Messiah and rejection of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Military powers are temporal phenomena in the ages of nations.

In this state of confusion most people find an excuse not to study new ideas or religion that might cross their path. In some of the islands the pastors taking advantage of this situation have discouraged people from examining any new truth on arrival. Some also change religions so casually and carelessly as if religions are like shirts that one may choose from according to one's fancy. The sentimental liberals in the advanced countries influenced by modernized Hindu sects even claim that it doesn't matter really what religion one chooses, all are roads leading to the same God.

How beautiful easy and attractive a concept if only it were to be true. Surely denominations preaching fundamentally opposite dogmas cannot be the same religion in different colours as claimed. Obviously those who adopt this philosophy in most cases do so in an attempt to maintain peace and harmony in the society which is the good thing, but seeking out the true religion and sticking to it does not necessary mean intolerance towards others and fickle mindedness.

The Holy Prophet of Islam personally encouraged a Christian delegation to use the Muslim mosque to say their prayers. Obviously this was not due to the prophet's belief that Islam and Christianity are different faces of the same coin. Let us now bear in mind that it is not a valid excuse to fold ones hands and do no searching for the truth due to the proliferation of religions in the world.

When your ring falls among the golden sands at the beach you will spare no effort to recover it due to may be the value or sentimental attachment. People stifle through hundreds of tons of mud, soil and stones for miserable quantities of gold and diamonds. We persist in this search till we are rewarded with what we seek but man is not prepared to spend a fraction of his time in search of the true way to God. Is God and Truth so unimportant? The proliferation of religions and ways to God is sometimes a problem, granted, but not an unassailable impediment. Stifle through all these religions and denominations honestly with unbiased mind and you would be surprised with the speed with which you would find the truth. In short too many religions is a problem but not a valid excuse to fold the arms and do nothing.

Among the rubble, there is the precious stone. Among the confusion there is the truth.

SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND.... Jesus said

RACIAL DIMENSION

There are only two religions, which could truly be classified as universal, Christianity and Islam. Christianity became universal crossing all geographical boundaries because the powers, which ruled the world for the past five centuries were European, Christian powers.

Islam is the only religion, which is truly universal right from its very beginning. Jesus Christ was a prophet only for the Israelites and strictly ordered his Disciples to confine themselves to Jews. (Matt 15:21-27 and Matt 10: 5-6)

"... And behold a Canaanite Woman from that region came out and cried, have mercy on me.... He (Jesus) answered "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

... And he (Jesus) answered "It is not fair to take the children bread and throw it to the dogs".

These twelve Jesus sent out charging them,

"GO NOWHERE AMONG THE GENTILES, and enter NO TOWN OF THE SAMARITANS, but go rather to the lost sheep of the HOUSE OF ISRAEL"

His style and approach was totally Jewish, therefore "Go ye and make Disciples of all nations attributed to him in Matt.28 is clear contradiction of his clear instructions, practical deeds and emphatic elucidation of his mission.

DR. ABBA EBAN, an Eminent Scholar who lectured at Cambridge University and one time Foreign Minister of Israel wrote in his book; MY PEOPLE, P. 105, "Jesus was a Pharisaic Jew. He had lived among the common people of Galilee and was the spokesman of their

ideas. Galilee was the stronghold of a robust Jewish patriotism, which found resonance in the teaching of Jesus, insofar as they conformed to those of the ancient prophets. He never considered himself a universal prophet outside the Jewish context. It cannot even be said that he was indifferent to the external forms of religion. He meticulously kept Jewish laws, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem on Passover, ate unleavened bread and uttered a blessing when he drank wine; he was a Jew in word and deed. He declared in the Sermon on the Mount that he had not come to destroy the law but to fulfill."

The fact is those who succeeded Jesus had little success among the original audience and recipients of the message of Jesus'. St. Paul expressed his anguish at the failure of Jesus' message among the Jews in Acts 13; 46. Jesus message was more successful among the pagans and other Gentiles. Finally after about 10 centuries it became truly a world religion. The Roman Emperors conversion to Christianity became a catalyst for these developments. Today Christianity is more universal than any other religion.

Europe is where Christianity came to find permanent home. This was after the pagan Romans adopted it as state religion; however it took many centuries more for the Romans to establish it in other parts of Europe.

When the Europeans started to go out to colonize the world, they took along this religion; Jesus Christ replaced many pagan gods.

In both North and South America the native inhabitants are almost all wiped out and replaced by European Christians. The powerful Christian settlers have assimilated many of the few Red Indian populations that remained. America is therefore Christian together with its Continental Islands and the Caribbean.

Australia and New Zealand follows the American pattern. The Pacific Islands, which were also colonized but not settled by the Europeans, have also adopted Christianity and some of the most fundamentalist Christians in the world are found in the Islands of the Pacific. The Pacific therefore became Christian due to the accident of European colonization like many other parts of the world.

When the Europeans started the exploration of Africa in the 15th Century, North Africa was already Muslim so were major parts of West Africa. In the east there were many Muslims with the exception of the Ethiopian kingdom and some tribes. Central and Southern Africa was traditional and in these areas Christianity made a lot of gains. In the West and East Africa most of the non-Muslim tribes were converted to Christianity.

There are two factors, which opened the way for the success of Christianity in the non-European areas of the World. First and foremost it was European colonialism. Secondly determined and sometimes aggressive missionary work by Christian pastors who always sailed with the colonizers. The missionaries in many cases made the work of colonizing easier and therefore enjoyed the full support and assistance of the European kings and powers. The fact is some of the Kings main aim of colonizing new areas was to win these lands for Christ and also gain from trade and gold. In these endeavour atrocities were committed in the name of Christ and also some honorable sacrifices were made especially by some of the missionaries.

Now as to whether the colonizing of the peoples of the world was a blessing or a curse is not for the Europeans to decide. The colonized people are the best judges to their fate. The European Christian view is that heathen barbarians were civilized and won over to Christ by them. Some natives genuinely accept this view preached to them by the Europeans but many of them are not so sure especially some of the intellectuals who do not owe their education and enlightenment to the church or mission schools. Even the Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, a Noble prize Laureate said:

"When the Europeans came we had the land and they had the Bible. They told us to close our eyes and pray. When we opened our eyes they had the land and we had the Bible."

Before the wave of independence swept these colonies this was exactly the position. The best lands were owned by the churches and colonial masters while the natives became deeply Christian. Even now it is obvious that the fundamentalist Christians are not found in

the cradle of Christianity Europe, but in places like Fiji, Africa Latin America and remote areas far from Europe.

Most people knew and worshipped God the Almighty before Christianity. Apart from the Supreme God the pre-Christian people had host of other gods, which they prayed to and worshipped.

The people of Vaitupu in Tuvalu atolls prayed to "He who is Most High". What Christianity did was to abolish the host of Gods and replace them with God the Father, God the son and God the Holy Ghost in short the Trinity. The transformation from belief in many Gods to only three (in one) was in most cases achieved with little resistance. The introduction of Christ and Holy Spirit, unknown gods to these new people in non-European areas was achieved in about four centuries of colonization of the World.

Another important factor, which swayed natives to Christianity, was the prestige of joining the Master, the colonizing powers in the same church or religion. The member of the church could identify himself with the rulers. The church at least gave him a limited equality and fraternity with the rulers which was otherwise not available anywhere else. Whenever the colonist distributed some favours to their subjects, the Christians or "good guys" had precedence (even as Arab oil money will most likely, go to a Muslim country nowadays than a Christian nation) this helped conversion as well.

Finally the schools, hospitals and other human institutions apart from being truly useful for the people were excellent laboratories for making Christians.

I remember being punished at least one or two occasions in a school for not attending the Sunday service even though everyone knew me as a son of the Muslim Missionary in charge of that district. I did attend my prayer daily in the mosque of course, but to the church school authority, that was a wrong church.

Chapter 3

THE ANCESTRY OF MOHAMMED - AN IMPEDIMENT?

According to the logic of some pastors, God promised to bless only Isaac and his descendants. They say that only Isaac is the son of Abraham. Since Mohammed the founder of Islam is not from Isaac but Ishmael he cannot fit into the Diyine plan. Some go further and say, Ishmael and his descendants are from a slave woman Hagar. A noble prophet cannot appear from such a woman. There are some pastors who throw away all caution and decency and preach that Ishmael was born out of adultery. They argue that Abraham's union with Hagar was adulterous, they quote Gen 21:10 to support the wicked defamation of the great patriarch Abraham, the father of the world's three great religions.

One shudders at what some Christian evangelist are prepared to tell in order to keep their grip on the people. Since adultery is one of the greatest sins, it is unthinkable that God would keep a friend who is such a great sinner! For such overzealous evangelists Gen. 12:3 is a warning enough "I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse and by you all families of the earth shall bless themselves."

WHAT WAS GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM?

It is important for every student of the Bible to remember that the Bible is a book of the Jews for the Jews, an account of what happened between the Jews and their Lord Yahweh. While we fully admit that most part of the Hebrew Scriptures was inspired, it is also true that later biblical scholars have revised it many times, diluting the true inspired words of God. Only the bible ignorant or the blind fundamentalist may be unaware of this fact.

Racism and Jewish 'superiority mentality' is one of the factors that have influenced the Hebrew writings. The Jewish word for the non-Jew, which is often translated gentile is not exactly complimentary and it is often, substituted with dogs, pigs etc. (Matt 7:6)

In the Biblical narration of the accounts of Ishmael and Isaac one cannot fail to detect this *superiority complex* mentality. The result is that a perfectly and socially accepted marriage to housemaids and slaves then is portrayed as adultery as in case of Hagar, but hundreds of similar marriages in the ancestry of Sarah is celebrated and not a word of reproach is said about it!

THE COVENANT

Gen.17:1-7: The main points stressed in Gods covenant with Abraham are; if Abraham had faith and "walked before God blameless" God will:

- (a) Bless Abraham with uncountable descendants
- (b) Abraham will become the father of "Many Nations"
- (c) Kings will appear among his descendants
- (d) His descendants will possess the whole land of Canaan forever

The sign to seal this covenant was for Abraham to circumcise all males in his house including himself. Abraham carried this on that very day.

Gen. 17:23-27 makes a clear distinction between Abraham and his only son at that time Ishmael, on one side, and his slaves and those born under his roof (but not his sons) on the other. Ishmael therefore had the privilege of taking part in this covenant right from the beginning with the father. He was then about 12 years old. Ishmael was undisputed son of Abraham in every sense and the only son when God sealed the covenant.

It is quite clear that according to Genesis the benefits from the covenant was fundamentally physical and material, Kingdoms, the land of Canaan, descendant like stars being the principal ones. There is not a single word about prophet or prophet hood included in the covenant.

The question of descendants of Hagar being disqualified from the blessings of prophethood as it is alleged that they are not part of the covenant does not arise, because strictly speaking prophethood according to Genesis accounts, played no role in the covenant. The promise to send a prophet or prophets was made to Moses Deut. 18; 18.⁴ The covenant in the strict sense therefore has nothing to do with prophethood. Therefore to preach that since Mohammed is not from Isaac, he is not a party to or recipients of Abraham's blessings, and therefore cannot be a prophet is a total misconstruction of the whole issue. God did not make a covenant about prophethood. He left the appointment of this high spiritual office in His own hand and appointed prophets any time in any place He chose. The fact that the Jews had a continuous supply of prophets and sages does not alter this basic truth.

THE QURANIC ACCOUNT

As pointed out earlier the Quran persistently steers away from petty jealousies and defamation of other races so apparent in the Bible. It is truly a universal book and a word of God which gives credit to those deserving it without considering their ancestry or origins. It chastises those who deserve it whether they are Arabs or Jews. Any student of the Holy Quran cannot fail to recognize it. All the Jewish prophets mentioned in the Holy Quran are presented in a most dignified manner.

"Say ye, 'We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac and Jacob and his children, and what was given all other prophets from their lord. We make no distinction between any of them; and to him we submit ourselves.'" (Al-Baqarah Ch. 2:137)

The Holy Quran does not even present the alleged adultery of Jewish leaders like David or Judah and has indeed admitted that the Jews were exalted above all people in the past. They held a special place in God's eyes.

⁴ Gen. 18.18 actually prophesizes the advent of a prophet from among the Arabs, the brethren of the Israelites

This is a fact, which the Holy Quran presents without degrading the Arabs or other nations or making the Jews superior to others. The Jews were exalted only because they remained the most righteous people, fulfilling Gods commandments for a long time. For this reason God blessed them with succession of prophets. This exaltation or "superiority" was something the Jews earned partly by their righteousness and dedication to the commandments of God, partly as a result of their suffering in slavery under the Pharaohs and later by their willingness to worship the only true God in contrast to all the peoples who worshipped hosts of gods. Therefore the grace from God was not theirs by right. God cares for all his creation!

This exaltation is available to any nation, which became righteous or implemented God's commandments. The proof for this is whenever the Jews become wicked and arrogant their ancestry or link with Abraham did not save them; they were turned into slaves, captives and housemaids.

The Holy Quran stressing this point says:

"Surely the most noble among you is the most righteous among you". (Ch. 49:26)

Historically this fact is apparent in the case of the Jews. So far as they kept to the commandments and righteousness they enjoyed this special position despite their occasional disobedience but when their wickedness exceeded all bounds, murdering some of the prophets and crucifying others, God took away this "exaltation" and special relations away from the Jews and scattered them in foreign lands giving the promised land to pagans. For 2000 years the Jews were deprived of the Promised Land, far longer period than the period they occupied it. But it did not please God to keep the holy land in the hands of pagans for long, so the pagans were converted soon to be the followers of Jesus. We may put it this way, the Jews were no longer fit to own the holy land but since God did not wish to keep it with the pagans He gave it to the best people of that time i.e. the followers of Jesus but Gentiles who were spiritually better than the Jews and the pagans.

But Gentile Christians did not fully fulfill the promise of God to Abraham. Even though Christians may rightly claim spiritual

descendant from Abraham, physically the pagan Roman turned Christians did not fulfill "I will give this land to your descendants to inherit forever". The Christians' occupation was therefore to be considered a temporal step to allow true spiritual and physical descendants of Abraham to inherit the holy land.

In the year 622 A.D. the holy land was transferred to the descendants of Abraham again, but this time not to the house of Israel but the house of Ishmael. The Ishmaelites, Arab Muslims, took over Jerusalem and the holy land from the Christians with far less bloodshed than when the Israelites first took it from the original inhabitants of the holy land the Canaanites, Hittites etc. It may be recalled that the Ishmaelites led by their spiritual and political head the Caliph Umar entered Jerusalem peacefully after a siege.

The Ishmaelites inherited the holy land for over a thousand years with the exceptions of less than one century when Jerusalem and part of the holy land was occupied by the crusaders.

The fact is if God did promise Abraham to give the holy land to his descendants, this promise has been fulfilled. First God gave it to the children of the junior son Isaac who inherited it for about 620 years⁵. Later God gave it to the Ishmaelites for double that period, about 1200 years.

The ways of God are amazing. It seems that the Jews wanted to deprive their brothers of the benefit of Abraham's covenant by ruling the Arabs out of the benefit of the covenant i.e. the holy land. But God has not only proved them wrong by affirming the birth right of Ishmael. He also re-established the real position of Ishmael i.e. first born of Abraham and direct participants in the covenant. This he did by giving the holy land to them for double the period given to the Israelites.

Now the world powers have combined to transfer most of the land to the Israelites again, simply because the Ishmaelites had become

⁵ From the conquest of Canaan by Joshua around 1210 B.C. to the fall of Judah in July 587 B.C. God did keep this promise to Abraham about the Holy land by alternating it among his children.

fragmented as a result of crafty British diplomacy backed by military prowess and victory during the first and second world wars.

Even though Israel has total military grip on the holy land and its Arab neighbours, no one can predict what shall happen in the future.

"DESCENDANTS LIKE STARS"

The other important point in the promise of God to Abraham is to give him uncountable progeny or many descendants uncountable like the stars. The Christian pastors who normally act like advocates for the Jews in the Israeli Arab differences are quiet on the point. The reason simply is that this promise is fulfilled much more dramatically among the Ishmaelites than the Israelites. There may be about 15 million Israelites in the whole world, the Ishmaelites, are at least a dozen times that number. The more one throws away Ishmael from the covenant the more God affirms it. The whole issue has been described by Jesus in his famous parable Matt. 21:42. The rejected stone or the "cast away" has taken the prominent positions in the covenant of Abraham.

There are other favours of God upon the descendants of Abraham not directly mentioned in God's promise. Some of the favours are Religion, Scriptures or Holy Book and Prophethood.

With the exception of the office of prophethood the Israelites in no way excel their brothers. On the contrary Israel was given a fundamentally and practically a tribal or national religion and scripture even Yahweh God assumed an Israelite national God. The Ishmaelites on the other hand were made the recipients and custodians of a truly universal religion and a universal Scripture 'the Holy Quran.

One has to admit the reality that Israel was blessed with constant supply of prophets⁶ to lead and guide them. No other nations had such a number of prophets.

⁶ Most of the Israelite prophets however would pass for a saint or sage in the Mohammedan dispensation. The Prophet Mohammed said "the righteous scholars of my community are equal to the prophets of the Hebrews." According to Islam Solomon was not only a king but a prophet as well

The Ishmaelites had only one prophet but a universal one and it is generally accepted by historians that Mohammed the Ishmaelite has been the most successful and influential prophet that ever lived. His success was achieved right in his lifetime.

Above all it is a most important fact to remember that they were a 'cast away' only according to the Israelites. God did not cast them away.

The Bible itself agrees that till Abraham's death Ishmael remained his son Gen 25:8-9 says when Abraham died *his sons Isaac and Ishmael* buried him, a proof that there existed a very close relations between Ishmael and Abraham more than the Jews would wish after calling the Ishmaelites the rejected ones for so long.

Ishmael was close to the father when the father died otherwise it would have been impossible to send a message to Ishmael for him to come and join in the burial-rites even if he was a few hundred miles away. Text, e-mail, and phones didn't exist! Mortuary is of recent origin. Abraham might have sent part of his family away to Paran to keep the peace and prevent the two women from quarrels. The cast away stigma is more due to racism than reality. Rejected by Hagar's marital rival, Sarah, not by God or the righteous Abraham, friend of God.

PROPHETHOOD AND LINEAGE

Prophet-hood is a gift from God. He bestows it upon whomever He pleases. He may choose a prophet from among enslaved people like Moses and his people in Egypt or from Royal family like Solomon. They are not chosen through democratic elections or the appointees of the nobles or royals. Due to the heavy responsibility of the office of prophethood many of those chosen by God show polite reluctance as in case of Moses. The Bible shows that among the Israelites God chose prophets from all the groups even though some of the tribes had more prophets than others.

Since this office was fundamentally spiritual not material, the quality and righteousness of the candidate is what is important not the lineage. Every nation in her history has been enslaved for some time by some others. There have not been everlasting royals or slaves anywhere. The Holy Quran describing this phenomenon says:

"And thus how we have alternated the good and bad days among the people". (Ch 3:141)

Israel as a nation has suffered slavery more than most. In fact the suffering for the Israelites in slavery under the Egyptians was so much that God had pity on them and chose a prophet from among them, Moses, to deliver them from servitude. Even in the Promised Land the Israelites ruled themselves for fewer years than foreign supremacy over them. The Babylonians carried them into slavery *en masse* in 586 B.C. They were restored only to be enslaved again by the pagan Greeks, pagan Romans then Roman Christians; the Arab Muslims finally took over from the Christians. The Romans who destroyed Jerusalem, scattering them among many nations, dealt the greatest blow to the Israelites. For 2000 years the Jews have been in a Diaspora.

Before Jesus Christ was rejected and crucified by the Jews, they had prophets in every condition whether as a free nation or in slavery. Daniel was among the great prophets appointed to prophethood in captivity. If slave lineage was a bar to prophethood Moses could neither have been a prophet nor Daniel Jeremiah etc.

If God could choose a Moses from a clearly slave nation and appoint a Daniel from helpless people in captivity who is preventing the same God from choosing a prophet "like Moses" from the children of Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar?

ISAAC'S INHERITANCE

"And she said... my son Isaac" Gen. 21:10. Abraham was a wealthy man according to the standards of that time. Sarah used her position as the senior wife and the relative of the husband to back her petty jealousy to win material wealth for her son even if it meant depriving the first-born Ishmael of his rights. If this passage is authentic we

can only speak of Sarah as a woman overcome with human weakness and jealousy, but this does not mean that God would have supported this apparent mistake at all. The Israelites instead of deriving the satisfaction from the deprivation of Ishmael of his legitimate right should rather consider it as an unfortunate incident in their history.

Of course there is no need to blame subsequently all the Jews for this act of Sarah. They will be blamable if only they feel proud of this clear injustice.

From the Bible it becomes clear that what Isaac inherited from the father was sheep, goats, camels etc, material wealth of the father.

It seems that there was a clear understanding between Abraham and his first-born Ishmael who bore no grudge at all over the monopolizing of the fathers property by Sarah. Deprived of legitimate rights he did not take a hostile stand against the father and the brother Isaac.

One can only visualize a noble and generous elder brother who does not make issue of his rights and share in the property but works hard to acquire independently his own wealth, an excellent example of a strong and ambitious young man. This scenario is not merely hypothetical; we often experience such situations in our daily lives especially in the third world (where legalities and the courts are seldom resorted to in quest of justice).

Sarah is not the only ancestor of the Israelites who behaved in this manner. Rebecca even went a step further. She planned and helped her younger son Jacob deprive her own elder son Esau of his legitimate birth right and blessing through craft and deceit. Her senior son from the same husband Isaac. The scandalous manner in which Esau was deprived of his blessings makes Sarah's action against Hagar look a very minor incident indeed.

YOUR ONLY SON "ISAAC"

"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering

upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you". (Gen. 22:2)

The passage if it is authentic part of the book of Moses is at best a serious contradiction of the facts and the Bible itself.

The same book of Moses states categorically and in an unqualified terms that Ishmael is the son of Abraham born before Isaac and since Ishmael did not die before the birth of Isaac and both out-lived their father Abraham, the designation of Isaac as thy only son could at best be put mildly as slip from over zealous copyist because it does not make any sense to put it charitably.

Isaac was never at any moment the only son of Abraham rather it was Ishmael who enjoyed this position for over 13 years before the birth of Isaac the second son. Some have argued that since Ishmael and the mother were sent away Isaac truly remained the only son of Abraham.

Please remember that Abraham never rejected or denounced his first-born Ishmael at any time. He sorrowfully sent them away under the pressure of the jealous senior wife according to the Bible. In places where polygamy persists we see other wives sent away under pressure from the senior wife or sometimes the younger and more attractive wife.

In such cases children from such "cast away" wives do not suddenly become fatherless. In case of Abraham the link and love between father and son persisted. They were cast away according to Jewish writer not in the eyes of Abraham or God.

THE "ROYAL" HOUSE OF ISRAEL

Jacob, also known as Israel had twelve sons whose descendants are popularly known as the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve sons were from four mothers (or wives) of Jacob. Two of the wives of Jacob, Leah and Rachel are senior and junior sisters respectively from the same parents, their father was Laban. Gen. 30: 16-28.

- (A) Leah bore six sons to Jacob namely Reuben, Simon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulon. Rachel the second wife bore Joseph and Benjamin to Jacob. Leah gave her housemaid Zilpah to Jacob and with Zilpah Jacob had two sons Gad and Asher. Rachel also gave her housemaid, Bilhah and with her Jacob had Dan and Naphtali.

These are the twelve children/tribes of Israel, from four mothers, two free women who were sisters and two bondwomen or maidservants.

- (B) A third of the twelve tribes therefore, are from maidservants. There is no discrimination whatsoever among the twelve children on the basis of the mother's background and all were equally blessed. One of the most prominent biblical figures, the visionary Elijah is almost certainly from Naphtali the son of Zilpah the bondwoman.

- (C) Joseph was special to the father among the twelve brothers. His own siblings for twenty pieces of silver, sold Joseph the most honoured and beloved of the twelve children. The buyers were incidentally, Ishmaelites/Arab, travellers who in turn sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt. Pontiphar the Egyptian army officer who bought Joseph from the Arabs adopted him as a son. It seems ironical that the noblest of the "Royal" Israelites, Joseph, was bought and sold like any slave or merchandise by the Arabs.

- (D) God uplifted Joseph from slavery into high position in Egypt by giving him the knowledge of the interpretation of dreams; he invited the whole family into Egypt after a devastating famine. However the whole tribe was later enslaved in Egypt and nothing of the "royalty" was left.

These are hard facts of history, indisputable and affirmed by the Holy Bible.

Those who degrade Ishmael or the Arabs due to the alleged mother's background but conveniently ignore the torturous and sometimes degrading phases of the "royal" Israelites passage through history are people who are prepared to be dishonest and are indeed very unjust to say the least.

The Bible gives an account of Ishmael's marriage in one sentence casually as if it was a non-event.

This contrast sharply with the elaborate narrations of Isaac's marriage. In this case the Bible tells us of the special care taken to choose for Isaac a wife from his father's family. But the fact is, even in this treatment of Ishmael's marriage men of clear unbiased minds cannot fail to notice that Hagar might have been a well-known lady and not 'a bought and sold' slave as the Jews would like the world to believe.

The very fact that Hagar was able to go back to her people and be accepted, and then arrange a wife from her people for her son shows that she was a highly regarded lady or at least she came from a recognized family and background. Thankfully the Bible does not suggest that Hagar bought a wife for her son from the slave market. The silence over the background of Ishmael's wife certainly does not in any way harm the Ishmaelites.

From the biblical tradition one cannot but conclude that if Ishmael's wife was from the slave market the Jews could never have failed to seize upon it to complete the label on the Arabs as children of slave trade.

Finally, it is also important to remember that to the Semites especially the Jews and the Arabs the father is the main factor in the genealogy, the origin of the mother or her status was hardly considered. If the origin or status of the mother was so important the house of Judah could not have given us personalities like David, Solomon or Jesus, for according to the bible some of the mothers in this lineage were harlots, and many of them slaves and housemaids.

Even if one admits for a moment that Hagar was a slave, one would have to be honest to admit also that a blameless slave is certainly

preferable and more honourable than harlots even if the latter are from the nobles! Please refer to Genesis 38:12-28.

ISHMAEL AND THE FACT ABOUT "THE CAST AWAY"

The Holy Bible has given us a part of the story of Ishmael and her mother Hagar. For the full story we would have to look at extra-biblical sources. The bible is basically an Israelite history. Other nations are hardly mentioned except in reference to the Hebrews. It is therefore not surprising that the descendants of Ishmael find little mention in the Bible except the names of their first few generations.

The Holy Quran in this respect is unique. A student of the Holy Quran cannot fail to notice the total lack of bias in the Holy Quran against any nation, nor does it single out any nation for special treatment. The Hebrew prophets are mentioned with respect and veneration throughout and in fact the Holy Quran is more kind to these prophets even more than the Bible.

This may be a surprise to the Christian or Jew but it is a fact. While the Bible portrays some of the great men in the Bible as telling lies (Abraham) and some committing adultery (Judah, David) the Holy Quran preaches that Allah protected these men from such lowly behaviour. Holy Quran 21:26-29. (Al-Anbiya)

"And we sent no messenger before thee but we revealed to him; 'There is no god but I; so worship Me alone'. And they say 'The Gracious God has taken to Himself a son' Holy is He. Nay those whom they so designate are only His honoured servants; 'They speak not before He speaks, and they only carry out His commands. He knows what is before them and what is behind them and they intercede not except for him whom He approves it and they tremble in awe of Him.'"

The Hebrew canon assumes that the Israelites are specially chosen people of God and the others are lesser people. The use of the word "Gentile" for non-Jews is in the same context as the Chinese word for the foreigner, which is somehow, translated "Barbarian".

In the case of the Arabs, the status of the mother of Ishmael gave the Hebrews an excuse to portray them in all sorts of inferior colours.

It will be shortsightedness for any student not to take this Hebrew attitude into consideration when studying Ishmael and the Ishmaelites (the Arabs) from the Bible, which is essentially the work of Jewish scholars far from an accurate interpretation of history

So what is the full story of Hagar and her son Ishmael?

QURANIC VERSION

Abraham did not cast Hagar and Ishmael away due to the jealousy of Sarah. If Sarah had actually demanded that Hagar and her son be expelled at all, it was purely a coincidence. Abraham who had stood up against his people, a whole nation, bravely against idolatry would have most unlikely caved in to the demands of her wife to do such a pitiless and surely wrong thing; sending a young wife and his own son to perish in the wilderness.

Abraham received instructions from God to settle part of his family in the wilderness of Paran. This is clearly found in the Holy Quran. The purpose of this was to start another branch or generation dedicated to the worship of God.

"So that they may observe prayer" (Holy Quran Ch 14:38)

"Our Lord, I have settled some of my progeny in an uncultivated valley near thy sacred House. Our Lord, - that they may observe prayer. So make men's hearts incline towards them and provide them with fruits that they may be thankful."

The second object of this settlement also linked to the first was to reactivate the worship of God on the spot where the first house of worship of God on the earth was built "the Kaaba". At the time of Abraham this house had fallen into ruins, only the mark of the foundation remained.

"Surely, the first House founded for all mankind is that at Becca, abounding in blessings and guidance for all peoples.

(Holy Quran Ch 3:97)

Abraham and his son Ishmael raised this building again on the same spot and Ishmael's descendants became the custodians of this sacred and ancient house of worship, the Kaaba.

Contrary to the stigma of the "cast away" this is an honour of the highest degree of being chosen to be custodian of such an important spiritual symbol.

Too bad that in the course of history the Ishmaelites turned the sacred building into the den of idols even as the Jews turned the temple of God into the den of thieves Matt 21;13. The Holy Prophet Mohammed came to restore this house to its original purpose and it remains the greatest symbol of the worship and unity of God on the earth today.

The Arabs have an oral tradition of what happened when Hagar was sent there without much explanation from Abraham.

After sending them into the wilderness, Abraham gave Hagar some food and skin bag of water, turned and started walking away. Hagar surprised, cried after him "Abraham are you leaving us here?" Abraham filled with emotion did not respond, nor did he turn to look at them. He just walked on; Hagar asked the second time what have we done? Are you leaving us here to perish? No response from Abraham, Hagar cried the third time, Are you leaving us here! is it your God who has asked you to send us here? Abraham filled with tears and emotion nodded firmly. Hagar anxious, but somehow relieved, then said bravely, 'if so then God will not allow us to perish; He won't abandon us!'

Abraham went out of sight behind a sand hill and fell down on his face weeping and pouring down prayers from his heart. This prayer is recorded in the Holy Quran Ch 14:3642.

"My Lord I have settled part of my family in this desolate and infertile part of the earth...near your Holy House, so that they may observe prayer... Lord do provide for them..."

The word used by Abraham here is revealing indeed and explains the matter totally. "*Askantu*" I have settled, established part of my family, not abandoned or rejected as Christians want the world to believe!

After he cried his heart out in prayer and supplication behind the sand dunes he left; another great sacrifice from Abraham.

Abraham visited and spent time with Hagar and Ishmael from time to time and when the boy reached his youth, Abraham with his assistance rebuilt the ancient house of God

"And remember the time when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House, praying, 'Our Lord, accept this from us, for thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing'".

Holy Quran Ch. 2:128.

Finally Abraham prayed to God to raise from among the Ishmaelites a great prophet who shall guide them unto the right path.

'And our Lord, raise up among them a Messenger from among themselves, who may recite to them Thy signs and teach them the Book and Wisdom and may purify them surely, Thou art the mighty, the Wise'.

(Holy Quran Ch 2:130)

The Quranic account sharply contrasts with the biblical versions of the same event. For any keen observer it will become obvious that the Quranic account is more in tune with the character of decent people and a prophet of God like Abraham. The Quranic account does not in any way accuse Sarah of petty jealousy or callous disregard for justice nor does it accuse Abraham of cowardice and weakness before the unjust demands of his wife.

God wanted to bless both parts of Abraham's family in wonderful manner.

The Arabs must be commended for not seizing upon the Biblical account of the alleged Sarah's behaviour to ridicule the Jews.

Actually there are a lot of sour points in the moral and spiritual behaviour of the ancestors of the Hebrews. Some so serious that it throws into questions whether some of these Hebrew great men could even pass the test of becoming ordinary decent persons. Muslims hate to discuss these Jewish leaders not as a favour to the Jews but because we genuinely believe that most of these harlottery and deceit attributed to them may not be really true especially with the prophets.

The Bible refers to Jacob as

"As deceitful as Jacob" Jer. 9:4 (New English Bible)

Surely this is not an ancestry about which the Jews or Christian preachers should be proud of. But to the pastors there is nothing wrong in prophets appearing from the progeny of proverbial deceivers and liars especially if such a person is an Israelite!

They should give us a break!

Chapter 4

DOCTRINAL IMPEDIMENT

"I am the way the truth the life. No one goes to the father but by me".
(John 14:6)

After this clear message why preach of someone else whose name is not even in the Bible?

John 14:6 has been a great impediment to some Christians when the message of Islam is conveyed to them. But it need not be an impediment at all. With a little reflection one could easily come to the conclusion that by this statement Jesus has not prohibited us from accepting true and genuine messengers from God.

The first thing to ponder over concerning this verse is what about the period before Jesus was born when he was not in his world, was there no way to God. Did millions of generations perish because there was no way "Jesus" to lead them to the father? What was the role of all those prophets if they did not possess the capacity to lead their followers to God? If they were not "the way", what were they?

Surely there was the truth way to God before Jesus; the prophets and messengers of God led millions to the father. The fact is every prophet in his time is the truth the way and the life, by rejecting the prophet of the age there was no way a person could go to God. Jesus was only emphasizing this basic truth but as usual with his way of address, it is done more dramatically and in beautiful manner. In Moses' time he (Moses) was "the way" to the father so were Elijah, Jeremiah, and Amos etc.

Jesus Christ has been dead or missing form the world from the past 2000 years. Christians say he is alive in the skies. In any case Jesus is not with us. Some claim he is living in them in spirit. This idea stems from the belief that Jesus is God a Divine being so that even though he died he came up alive again and is living in millions of devout Christians all across the world. The practical man knows that Jesus is not alive at least in the world now. For the past 2000 years people have been waiting for him to descend from the skies. Their

patience is not exhausted yet. What remain of Jesus for the world in reality is his sayings, teachings and works found in the New Testament.

The meaning of John 14:6 changed completely with the death or ascension if you like of Jesus. When he was alive one must follow him and obey him before one could see God.

After his death/ascension, one had to follow the teachings so as to be able to go to the father. Even die hard Christians cannot pretend that Jesus is alive exactly as he was when he made this statement, so this has a different meaning now, but from whatever angle you look at it, you won't find that this statement says "do not accept any prophet after me even if the teachings of this prophet is similar or exactly like mine, and if such a prophet is truly from God"

The prophet Mohammed of Islam came after Jesus. He was a prophet who came to confirm the apostleship and Messiahship of Jesus, which has been a matter of dispute between the Jews and Christianity. Accepting him does not mean one has abandoned Jesus. It is not a clear choice of either Jesus, or Mohammed. They are not competing for followers. They are both servants of the same Master; God, who were appointed at different times to lead us, mankind to the Father. Mohammed is merely the latest servant to come with the lamp to lead us the way. Jesus after doing his job has passed on the torch to Mohammed.

In a relay race, say 200 x 4 each runner plays his or her role and we do applaud and hug all if there is a victory because all contributed and played their respective roles. The same concept applies to prophets. It might be hard on a Christian to give the impression that Jesus is now "retired" and another officer has taken his place. This is hardly what I am trying to convey. It is not a retirement he has done his part and passed on the baton even as Moses passed it on to Joshua. It was continued till John the Baptist passed it on to Jesus. It will be unreasonable to say the least, to insist that Jesus won't pass it on or we do not recognize the next one after him even when Jesus himself has categorically stated that someone was going to come after him John 16:14 The problem is in the unwillingness of some

Christians to trade in the mortality of Jesus Christ with his alleged divinity.

Every good Christian knows John 3:16 by heart. Modern Christian Bibles have changed the verse to read as:

"For God loved the world so much that he gave His One and only Son so that whosoever believed in him may not perish but have eternal life".

'The only begotten son' which formed the backbone of this verse has been broken without any explanation by Christian scholars.

Whichever one chooses to follow the K.J.V., which retains the only begotten son, or the N.I.V, which has replaced it with 'one and only son' there is nothing in the verse, which says you, must reject all prophets after Jesus. This is a false psychological impediment erected by the clergymen.

Belief in Jesus is what is demanded in this verse. Believing in Jesus does not automatically rule out belief in the past or future prophets. The Jews did not believe in Jesus and they perished spiritually and physically as a cohesive nation.

A Muslim can only be a Muslim if he or she totally accepts the apostleship of Jesus as the Christ and God's spokesman. This is not to please the Christians it is firmly rooted in Islamic belief. You don't lose Jesus by becoming a Muslim.

POLYGAMY

Polygamy is a Greek word, which means multiple partners in marriage. If it is a man who has many wives this is known as Polygyny. When a woman is married to more than one man it is known as Polyandry. If a person has many sexual partners outside marriage, he/she is promiscuous.

Polyandry has been very limited in human history and only a few societies practiced them. Polygyny however has almost universally been practiced in all continents of the world. The world famous

anthropologist George P. Murdock classified 250 cultures according to the form of the family. 193 out of the 250 were classified as polygynous.

Due to great socio-economic changes that have taken place in the world, polygamy has ceased in most societies, especially among the people of the more economically advanced countries.

WORLD RELIGIONS AND POLYGyny

Polyandry is rejected by the religions of the world except Hinduism, which had a practice very similar to polyandry. This practice known as Niyog" was that a woman who is unable to have a child from her legally wedded husband might have children from any other man while not divorced from the first husband. Some tribes in India also practiced polyandry in the real sense. It is known in Tibet as well.

Apart from Christianity, none of the major religions of the world banned polygamy. The Buddhist in Tibet did practice it, if communist China has now banned it, may be another matter. There is a clear evidence of polygamy in Hindu history. Islam did and does allow it. We shall now treat polygyny in Christianity, Islam and Judaism separately.

JUDAISM

Religious scholars all agree that the Jewish Holy Scriptures including the Torah and the prophetic books all accept polygamy.

There is no law against it in the Old Testament. Moses the lawgiver in Judaism did in fact give teachings on polygamy and how to regulate it and solve the problems of inheritance - Polygamy has therefore been an accepted practice among the Jews. Deut 21:15 - 18

It was not until 1020 A.D. that a law of Rabbi Gershon Ben Judah in the Synod of Worms absolutely prohibited polygamy among the Western Jews. This was apparently due to the influence of Christianity in the West. In the 14th century the Jews of Castile still practiced it and in the East the Jews still practice it. (Kalisah of Exodus P. 370; on Leviticus P. 374). If among the present Jews it

not common, it is not due to scriptural prohibition or the law of Rabbi Gershon in 1020 but due to the changed socio-economical circumstances, for Rabbi Gershon can never supersede Moses.⁷

HINDUISM

"A Hindu may marry any number of wives although he has a wife or wives living". (Hindu law by D. Pathak, Bar at law P. 121)

According to Jajnyavalkya, the taking of a second wife in the lifetime of one previously married is allowable under certain circumstances. "One who drinks inebriating liquors, who is incurably diseased, who is quarrelsome, or barren, who wastes his wealth, who speaks unkindly, who brings forth only daughters, may be superseded by another wife, so may she who manifest hatred to her husband." (Manu Ch. 9 vs. 8-, 81,82) But according to learned scholars there are "so many indications as to the legality of polygamy in the Shastras, and the practice so common" that it can be definitely said that "a second wife may be taken in the lifetime of the first even without any justifying cause". (A STUDY OF RELIGION IN HINDUISM - 2

BY Abdul Hamid Ghazi Muslim Herald April 1971).

CHRISTIANITY

The first or earliest Christians were Jews in the full sense. Roland H. Barnton writes in "The History of Christianity" P.34.

"Jesus preached as a Jew to Jews. He had been carefully brought up in the tradition of his people ... Jesus taught in synagogues...Like hundreds of thousands of other faithful Jews, Jesus often went to Jerusalem for annual Passover festival".

⁷ Moses himself married a second wife from Africa, a Cushite woman

Jesus himself stated it categorically that he had no intention of abolishing the Jewish law.

Matt 5:17

Wherever it seemed that he apparently made changes in the law of the prophets, the changes seemed to be cosmetic rather than substantive. This is very true in case of, for example the Sabbath because Jesus himself definitely observed the Sabbath on Saturdays as any good Jew. His healing on the Sabbath was not contrary to the spirit of Sabbath. Mercy and compassion demanded that he helped the distressed even on Sabbath.

The gospels indeed mention very few changes here and there made by Jesus but none was relevant to polygamy. Some of the amendments made by Jesus are the famous "Love thy enemy" "turn the other cheek" which are advised rather than amendment in any law.

A cursory glance of Christianity and its history will become clear that Christians never obeyed these changes, and to be fair with Christians it is not that they don't want to obey they are simply not practical teachings. From the time of the crusaders to our present age Christian kings and laymen, have waged wars against their enemies instead of loving them. Her Majesty's Britain with her allies' mostly Christian nations never loved Hitler or Nazi Germany, their enemy in the world wars, nor did they offer Germany their island after she seized the countries allied to Britain, for example. George Bush and Tony Blair damned the world, the U.N. and Jesus Christ and hated Saddam Hussein instead of loving him and these gentlemen do believe in Jesus.

About marriage Jesus clearly taught that no one should divorce his wife except for adultery. Anyone who does that and marries another has committed adultery. Matt 19:3-12. In the distant past the Catholic Church tried with some degree of success to ban divorce. In some cases when differences became irreconcilable a partner killed the other or committed suicide since divorce or separation was not an option.

As with other teachings this one on divorce has not survived in practical terms.

The Christians claim that Jesus prohibited polygamy, but there is not a single saying of Jesus in the Gospels, which could clearly support this claim. Mark 10: 1-12 often quoted in this effect is a teaching concerning divorce and not prohibition or otherwise of polygamy even by implication.

Some Christian theologians argue that Gen. 2:24

"Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh" is clearly an indication of God's intention in respect to monogamy.

Jesus Christ indeed quoted this verse also Mark 10:7-8 but Jesus did not quote this to prohibit polygamy as discussed above. If a man has more than one wife he can be one flesh with the second as well without contradiction even as a person may have one or more intimate friends or workmates to a degree. Those in such situation know better.

If monogamy was the intention of God as it is argued it would seem very strange indeed that God did not make his will or intention known to hundreds of prophets including Abraham, Moses and Jesus but rather permitted his righteous representatives on the earth, the prophets, to marry as they wished. The Bible clearly tells us that most of the pious and Godly people had more than one wife and apparently this was no bar to their spiritual development and high moral achievements.

THE CHRISTIAN ROAD TO MONOGAMY

Every student of Christianity knows that after Christianity moved from the Jewish background to the Greek and Roman pagan areas it lost its "Jewishness" and adopted many customs of the Gentiles. In this context we find that among the pre-Christian Romans and Greeks at that time ideal marriage meant one man one wife i.e. monogamy but men freely had access to concubines and slaves. While Christianity brought morality to the Romans after converting them it also adopted some of the social practices of the Romans. Apparently monogamy was one of such adaptation from the Romans. Once monogamy was adopted it became not too difficult to find

alleged saying of Jesus and particularly St. Paul to legitimize and support it. Therefore Matt. 19:3-8, 1 Cor. 7:2-7, Eph. 5:21-33 etc are quoted as basis for the dogma of monogamy but these verses could easily be challenged as true basis for monogamy. They are never conclusive evidence at all in support of monogamy or otherwise.

The Catholic Bible Dictionary has this under marriage.... "Again since Christ spoke generally of all mankind and not simply of these who were to be members of his church theologians hold that he withdrew the former dispensation, and consequently that polygamy is now unlawful and a violation of natural law even for heathens" (Billiard De Matrimon diss v.a.1)

We have three major points in the above statement.

- (a) Christ withdrew the Mosaic dispensation
- (b) He brought a new law by declaring polygamy unlawful
- (c) Polygamy is unlawful because it violates natural law.

One wonders at the extreme limits some of our Christian academics and theologians are prepared to go to ban polygamy even when there is no shred of evidence in support of this prohibition.

Christ himself as quoted earlier could not have expressed himself more emphatically and eloquently, I have not come to destroy the law or the prophets Matt 5:17... "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and the earth disappear not the smallest letter nor the last stroke of pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

- (a) He never made such a statement that polygamy is unlawful.
- (b) What natural law does our learned writer has in mind! Anthropologist would challenge this claim. The reverse of this claim is true, Monogamy is the unnatural law

forced on the society not polygamy. Man, even more than his partners in the animal kingdom is more polygamous by nature. The proof is apparent to all, in the monogamous societies polygamy through the back door or illegal sexual relationship is so widespread that we wonder why one would insist on this hypocrisy.

- (c) How this imaginary prohibition could be enforced even upon the *heathen* the author has left it to us to guess.

There is however ample evidence that the earliest Christians or Judeo Christians like their Jewish countrymen did practice polygamy. Even one of the Popes, Gregory II allowed a man to take a second wife under certain circumstances for example when the first wife is attacked by a sickness that makes it hard for her to discharge her marital obligations, the Pope allowed the husband to marry again but also keep the first one. (CATHOLIC DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE PAGE 542)

In Britain, Polygamy was enforced through an act of parliament.

In the United States it was not until 1882 that the Congress passed the law forbidding polygamy after sectarian conflicts, which made the debate on polygamy highly politicized. The Mormons had insisted on their religious rights to practice polygamy. They practiced polygamy till 1890 when they also banned it.

Like many of the laws, the ban on polygamy was passed by the acts of parliament and not dictated by the Bible or the teachings of Christ⁸ however people have seriously questioned the imposition of monogamy on the society from time to time.

Bernard Shaw is reported to have said:

"Monogamy is imposed by the economy of nature which more or less equalizes the birth rate of the two sexes, if war upsets it, you would have polygamy in ten minutes".

⁸ Even religious issues have their final determination in the parliament whose members as everyone knows are politicians rather than bishops or clergymen. See B Russell "Why I am not a Christian."

In 1946 a proposal was made in the British House of commons that polygamy be legalized. Alan Field commenting on the above proposal writes

"Although under public ban and branded as immoral by official public opinion, nevertheless there is indisputable evidence that polygamy is now practiced by thousands of people throughout Europe...." In plain fact the situation is that many women prefer to share a husband with one or more women than do without husband at all".

After the Second World War the shortage of men became so apparent and polygamy was freely in practice. The fact that when Christianity was strictly practiced in Europe there was no ban on polygamy but had to wait for parliament to ban it only a century ago is evident that the ban is more social than biblical.

ISLAM AND POLYGAMY

The Arabians before Islam were people who married as many wives as one liked. Their morals were horrible. At times, the son married his stepmothers if he wished when the father died. Islam did not introduce polygamy to the Arabs rather the Arabs and indeed all those who married so many wives were firmly restricted to four wives. The Quranic commandment into this effect should therefore be understood as a law *prohibiting uncontrolled polygamy rather than the promotion of polygamy*. The right statement is; Islam restricted men to four wives when there was no such restriction. Four wives would seem too many to our modern society but one must remember that some people became Muslims with 10 wives and were forced to divorce most of them for no cause other than that Islam limited them to four. One is free to argue why Islam didn't finish the matter by taking it to one man one wife and allowed up to four. I cannot fantasize an answer, for now what I know is Islam stopped it at four when there was no such limit in any religion.

Polygamy in Islam has been blown out of proportions. Certainly Muslims are not apologetic at all about polygamy however there are so many factors that would militate against marrying more than one. Firstly there are very few people who would feel the need to marry

more than one wife. According to Enc. Britt., probably around 5 per cent of the Arab Muslims have more than one wife. Secondly economic reasons especially during the present century do not permit large families. Finally the condition under which a Muslim is allowed to marry more than one is very strict and not at all easy to fulfill. Holy Quran 4:4 (AN-NISA) " And if you fear that you will not be just in dealing with the orphans, then marry of other women as may be agreeable to you, two, or three, or four, and if you fear you will not be able to do justice, then marry only one or marry what your right hand possesses. Thus it is more likely that you will not do injustice."

WHY ISLAM PERMITS POLYGAMY

- (1) Islam is a religion prescribed by Allah for mankind, which suits the human nature, it is most practical and it does not put forward such goals whose attainment is utopian. Both monogamy and polygamy is natural depending on the nature of people and their individual needs. Forcing either polygamy or monogamy on the people will be unnatural and produce a farce "moral" society.
- (2) Islam recognizes that under certain circumstances a man may be permitted to take on a second wife if his chastity and honour is to be protected. Pope Gregory II also cites one such example i.e. when the wife suffers serious sickness that makes her incapable.
- (3) Sometimes the ratio between men and women is seriously undermined as a result of depletion of male population due to wars. The world has gone through many such phases: In such situations it is only sensible to permit those men who could afford to look after some widows to marry again. This will protect the women who have lost their husbands from destitution, unchastity and protect the morals of the society in general.

There are many other reasons for which the Great Law Giver God, himself has permitted polygamy in human society throughout the ages. However a Muslim living in a country which has legislated against polygamy must obey the law of the land. He can only work to change the law legally and not rebel.

Have the over zealous monogamists ever pondered over how come most of the righteous men, friends of God including Abraham practiced polygamy. How come God never sanctioned them, if they were not sinners for being polygamous then why sinners now? What has changed!

On a flight from Tarawa to Nadi one very senior government official said once to me "I want to be a Muslim". I thought he was joking so I asked him "Sir why do you want to be a Muslim?" He replied "because I want to marry four wives". This was probably a joke but many a time jokes point to the thinking of those who crack the joke. Apparently this our friend really thought like many people that Muslims men must marry up to four wives.

Whatever the merits or demerits of polygamy a large number of sensible people do privately advocate the return to polygamy in some cases exactly as preached by Islam. A prominent French sexologist Dr. Le Bon has expressed this view openly. He has written

"A return to polygamy, the natural relationship between the sexes, would remedy many evils, prostitution, venereal diseases, abortion, the misery of illegitimate children, the misfortune of millions of unwanted women, resulting from disproportion between the sexes, adultery and even jealousy."

The church vehemently opposed divorce like polygamy at a certain stage in the past. It was considered sinful and immoral. Today Christians divorce more than any other people in the world. Polygamy is still condemned openly but practiced in the worse and illegal form. It is only a matter of time one hopes when this farce will be abandoned and those who may want to lead chaste lives with one or more wives may be allowed by the churches.

POLYGAMY AND HIV/AIDS

Sometimes we have guests on the TV and radio talk show arguing that one way of curbing the spread of this deadly disease is to ban polygamy. I have had a programme with a lady who claimed that polygamy is one of the major causes of the spread of HIV/AIDS. Such people confuse promiscuity with polygamy even as some pastors deliberately equate polygamy with adultery.

I wish to submit with all emphasis that *this is not true, factual or scientific conclusion whatsoever*. Those who argue like this do not have any scientific data to support the claim. On the contrary many of those nations who legally allow the practice of polygamy have the most cases of HIV/AIDS. In Africa it is the Christian Southern Africa, including Zambia (whose immediate past president Chiluba, a born again Christian) South Africa, Zimbabwe Botswana, Uganda the East etc. which have suffered the most with some countries having as much as twenty per cent of the population infected and affected.

According to statistical report of the United Nations Commission on AIDS, The Muslim States of the North including Morocco Mauritania, Egypt, and Libya etc. have very low prevalence of this epidemic. These are all polygamous societies. This, actually is not a matter of religion, it is life style. Those who pretend to stay with one wife but are in most cases unable to restrain themselves are those who spread this scourge. In those societies where you have many single women without husbands, you have the recipe for the spread of AIDS.

The case of Southern Africa is very sad. Indeed It is not that the Southern Africans are more immoral than other peoples. There are many causes for this situation there, Civil wars and wars of independence in the past forty years that displaced whole populations, breaking down morality and social taboos has been the main cause, Apartheid in South Africa that forced the breakdown of families and sent the men into labour far away from their wives. Men who are forced by circumstances to see their husbands only a few weeks a year because of Apartheid restrictions and the collection of men in barracks for long periods, all these factors became the

Chapter 5

THE STATUS OF WOMEN

catalyst for the spread of HIV/AIDS. The evidence is that the African countries, which are far from the proximity of the conflict areas, have much lower prevalence of this great threat to humanity in this age. Therefore the culprit is neither polygamy nor religion.

The fact is the Europeans have little respect for sexual taboos. The society, teach the world that there is nothing wrong with two consenting adults agreeing to have sexual relationship. It is just that they are better educated and are therefore more capable of protecting themselves from this disease.

Let us therefore remember that Polygamy does not spread AIDS, promiscuity does. Promiscuity and Polygamy are never the same in men of understanding. The Church, which for the past two thousand years preached against polygamy, has now not only tolerated, permitted and finally blessed homosexual marriages. Homosexual priests have been ordained recently and as usual it is the United States that has taken the lead in this. Priests have now joined the chorus to promote gay and lesbianism as more of a normal sexual orientation than a fundamental moral or spiritual issue. Do not be surprised the same Church which ordain openly gay priest strongly condemn polygamy as immoral! Would they allow God to rule on morality of mankind?

It is often alleged that Islam seriously discriminates against women. That Islam does not give equal rights to women. A lot of such remarks are carelessly made in the media and daily discussions. The problem is nobody has bothered to ask the Muslim women themselves whether they are suffering discrimination or not. The Western world has unilaterally decided for the Muslim ladies that they are suffering untold discriminations from Islam. Polygamy and the veil often used by Muslim women are often quoted as discriminatory against women. What everyone must bear in mind is that the discarding of the head cover or veil and the abolishing of polygamy is due to the onslaught of secularism in the Christian countries. When Christians used to be "real Christians" and not secularized the head cover and full long dresses was the ideal Christian way of dressing not very different from the Muslim women. St. Paul's clear teaching on this is found in Corinth 11:5-6.

If there were any credit in the discarding of the veil or head cover at all, the so-called credit would go to secularism rather than Christianity. In the matter of dressing the real teaching of Christianity is not very different from Islam. Even now the sisters in the Catholic orders strictly follow a dressing code which insists that they cover the head and not expose too much of their sexuality. There are no such orders in Islam among the male or female. What is decent or good for the Imam is good for all. The dressing code for all women is the same i.e. what is decent. The woman's body is not for display.

Go to Samoa, Fiji, Kiribati and any of the islands of the Pacific which unlike the 'civilized' world Christianity is alive and thriving, you will witness the dressing of the women which covers most part of their body especially on Sundays when there is heavy church activity. The only difference is that in Islam what is decent on Friday is equally good for Sundays and all other days.

Recently Islam phobia has galvanized some European countries to use their parliament to legislate against one type of veil willingly

adopted by Muslim women when they go out of their homes. However, again it is non-Muslims who have decided that the veil is a wicked imposition on the Muslim woman! The fact that the great majority of the Muslim women chose not to adopt that particular veil without threat, coercion or sanction from anyone does not make such apostasy of women rights any wiser. The fact that no Muslim woman has complained to them about that mode of dressing is irrelevant in the present anti-Islam fever.

WOMEN IN CHRISTIANITY

1 Corinth 11:3:

Throughout Christian history, beginning from St. Paul until the beginning of this century, Christian divines and scholars have made it clear that the woman is inferior to man. The only consolation is that Jesus himself seems not to have treated women badly. He rather seemed to have enjoyed the company and the service rendered by female companions. Prominent among them Mary Magdalene and the habit of Jesus should be commended because true prophets did not shun the rightful companionship of women.

Christianity historically followed Christian divines rather than Jesus in the treatment of women and the attitude of most of the divines I am afraid was not very favourable to women.

St. Paul is uncompromising on women.

"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. Do not suffer the woman to teach, not to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" 1 Timothy 2:11-14 "For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived was in transgression."

Today women are actively engaged in this prohibited trade, preaching more vigorously than men. St. Paul must be turning in his grave. The Anglican Church until recently was deeply in crisis; some members now believe that St. Paul should be ignored on this subject.

In Christianity now, what the majority decides is the Scripture, not what Jesus or the apostles taught. Christians must be wondering why Jesus could not choose a single woman as an apostle.

St. Bernard said

"Woman is the organ of Devil"

St. Jerome wrote

"Woman is the gate of the devil, the road to inequity, the sting of the scorpion."

St. John Chrysostom went further

"Of all the wild beasts the most dangerous is woman. If she is young she was a trap set by the devil and if she was old and withered she was likely to be a witch"

And we all know what has been the biblical prescription for witches!

As pointed out earlier, today if the condition of women has drastically changed for the better it is not due to the discovery of new verses in the Bible to help women and the credit goes not to Christianity. The Christian woman has to thank secularism of this century and Godless ideology like Marxism and the slogan of socialism for their emancipation. The truth cannot be covered, when Christianity was in the full bloom and Christians very religious, women had a rough time.

This news item appeared in the Times of July 22, 1797.

"The increasing value of the fair sex is regarded by many writers as a certain index of growing civilization.... In the market the price of the fair sex was again raised from one half to three and one half guineas".

Emerson writing in 1856 says: "The right of the husband to sell his wife has been retained down to our time"

All the above reflected the true situation in Christian Great Britain when they were more Christian than now rather than Muslims Iran or Saudi Arabia.

Some of the East Asian religions have gone much too far in the ill treatment of women. In Hinduism until suppressed by the British about a century ago a woman was expected by the dictates of her religion to kill herself when the husband died. This well-known religious practice, "Sativa" was considered a meritorious act therefore the widow jumped on the funeral pyre of her husband; both the dead man and the living wife were simultaneously cremated.

WOMEN IN ISLAM

The status and role of women in Islam has been grossly misunderstood especially in the West. Islam is indeed the only major world religion, which has guaranteed equality for women with men in its holy Book the Holy Quran. The high status of women is therefore canonized in Islam. Here are few examples.

Holy Quran 30:22 (AL-RUM)

"And of his signs is that He has created wives for you from among yourselves that you may find peace of mind in them and He has put love and tenderness between you. In that, surely, are signs for people who reflect."

Holy Quran 16:79 (AL-NAHL)

"And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing and gave ears and eyes and hearts, that you might be grateful."

Before Allah there is no distinction between man and woman and the principle of equal reward for equal work is firmly established.

Holy Quran 33:36 (AL-AHZAB)

"Surely, men who submit themselves to God and women who submit themselves to Him, and believing men and believing

women and obedient men and obedient women and truthful men and truthful women, and men steadfast in their faith and steadfast women, and men who are humble, and women who are humble and men who give alms and women who give alms and men who fast and women who fast and men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity and men who remember Allah much and women who remember him - Allah had prepared for all of them forgiveness and a great reward."

Honestly some Muslim societies have not given the equal rights prescribed by Islam to their women. This is apparent in many places but the vital difference and point to bear in mind is that such Muslim societies are guilty of disobedience to the teachings of Islam. Such societies have failed to implement the letter and spirit of Islam so far as the treatment of women is concerned. Discrimination against women is uncannical rather than sanctioned in Islam.

Islam has also prescribed different roles for male and female respectively for obvious biological, physical and psychological reasons. Our friends in the West are now pretending that equality of the sexes necessarily means there cannot be any distinction between the role and responsibilities of the father and mother in the family life or society. Islam rejects such perception of equality. Nature itself has definitely set aside certain roles for women. The truth is, this remarkable difference in roles is extended to the animal as well as plant kingdoms. Even in field of inorganic the positive charge is unlike the negative and they do not have the same role. Woman more than men need protection and her honour and chastity is always at a potential risk. No amount of philosophizing or feminist activism can change this natural truth. Most men never mind their faith I would not, honestly, happily let their wives mingle freely, alone unassisted among unknown men. When the man does not come home in time the whole family may go to sleep and expect Dad to come home when he is free. The family is generally worried when Mum is too late in coming. Surely Dad can't go to sleep even when the children are fed until mum comes home safely. This is the natural truth and no religion or ideology is going to change that. This is what Quran means by:

"And a man has a stage of responsibility above her."

Equal rights before the law, equal rights before God, and equal pay for the same work yes - but equality should not be confused with responsibility. The Holy prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) himself in numerous sayings recorded in the Muslim traditions known as Hadith has taught mankind the high status of women, the fact that in the procreation of human race women carry greater pain and bear greater responsibility has been acknowledged by Islam.

The Holy prophet therefore said:

"(Be careful) Paradise is under feet of the mothers"

This is to say that one can enter paradise only by being dutiful to the mother and serving her obediently and selflessly. Generally Muslims treat both parents very well especially in the old age, but the mother's good treatment is often emphasized. The parents are not packed off to the old people's home as done in the cradle of Christianity; in Europe. Of course I must admit that I have not found Biblical sanction for this detestable practice in the Christian West. The West has been singing its own praise for civilizing the world. True the world has gained a lot from Western education and technology, but the West has a long way to go in their moral conduct. In this they should learn from less developed world the humane and respectful treatment of parents who after giving their love care and everything become helpless in old age. There could be no higher moral value than humane and affectionate treatment of the old. The rest of the world should tell our friends in the West. You are immoral in this; you need to learn from us.

As pointed out earlier, in Europe not very long ago some unwanted old women were disposed off, burnt as witches. There is nothing similar to this in Islam since it is not a superstitious religion. When the Christians burnt poor unwanted old women as witches in Europe barely two centuries ago they were doing this heinous deed in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

"Thou shall not suffer the witch to live" (Exodus 22:18)

Again thanks to secularism and civilization today the worst an old lady can expect from the Christians of Europe is being shipped to old peoples home. Secularism not Christianity has saved them from being burnt alive as witches.

Chapter 6

WHO WAS THE SACRIFICIAL SON - ISHMAEL OR ISAAC?

According to the Israelites Isaac was the one taken for sacrifice. Gen 22;2 According to the Ishmaelites it was Ishmael not his junior brother Isaac. The claims of the Arabs or the Jews should be put to scrutiny objectively. The mere fact that the Jews have it recorded in their history - the Torah is not a proof enough for the impartial observer. In the same way the Arabs persistent claim does not make their case stronger to the world.

However a careful analysis of the Jewish claim recorded in the Bible and swallowed hook and line by the Christians also would rather make the Arabian case stronger than the Jews.

He said "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" Gen 22:2

If one drops the word "Isaac" from the text as an additional note made by the copyist (and a lot of such notes are known to biblical scholars) the problems become much easier to solve.

- (1) "Your only son:" it has been proved decisively that both Isaac and Ishmael were legitimate sons of Abraham, who says that? God! in the Bible, in many places Gen 6;16 / 17;23 etc.
- (2) "Your only son" can apply only to Ishmael and not Isaac - because Ishmael as the elder of the two, for thirteen years was the undisputed "Only son" of Abraham.
- (3) Since Ishmael was neither killed nor did he die in the lifetime of Abraham "Your only son" could not be applied to Isaac. He never carried this title.
- (4) "Moriah" is compatible with 'Marwah' Marwah is a hill in the vicinity of Mecca.

OTHER FACTORS

(5) This great sacrifice has been celebrated every year among the Ishmaelites throughout their history. It is more ancient tradition than the advent of Islam or birth of the Holy Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W.) It is therefore not a wishful thinking of the Muslims or invention of Islam for the Ishmaelites. Millions of sheep were sacrificed by the Ishmaelites and later the Muslims to commemorate this day every year. This is during the well-known pilgrimage, which brings together over two million Muslims from all over the world.

(6) The celebration of this sacrifice has not been a practice among Israelites. It has never been part of their heritage or tradition.

Isn't it very strange indeed to say the least that the Israelites do not celebrate this great sacrifice, if really, it was Isaac their ancestor who was the sacrificial son, but rather the Arabs, the descendants of the 'Cast away' family would have celebrated this sacrifice with festivity every year? Even after being sent away or expelled from his rightful inheritance, the Ishmaelites would have loved to celebrate the sacrifice of Isaac, with much fervour for thousands of years when Isaac's own descendants do not care the least! It is true that history may be full of irony but surely there is a limit even to such phenomena.

This will seem as if for example the Fijians not celebrating the birth of their high chief Cakabau but the Papua New Guineans celebrating it with full honour and festivity every year, or for example Muslims celebrating Christmas with full solemnity when Christians themselves know not such a celebration.

(7) The Gospel according to St. Barnabas has clearly "Your only son Ishmael" and not Isaac. It is not surprising that this gospel has unceremoniously been thrown out of the canonical books.

(8) The Holy Quran has shown Ishmael as the sacrificial son. You don't have to be a Muslim to accept the

Quranic version, the fact that the Holy Quran is persistently even handed in all matters including the history of the Jews and Arabs is enough a credible source for any impartial critic or seeker after truth. Islam has always acknowledged the greatness of Isaac and all Jewish prophets. The remarkable messenger of God, Moses, is given a very high profile in Islam. The name of Jesus has appeared many more times than even the prophet Mohammed by name in the Holy Quran. There should be no reason why Quran would have confirmed the Ishmaelite version of the great sacrifice if in reality it were Isaac and not Ishmael.

(9) The Holy Prophet Mohammed has stated

"I am the son of two sacrifices"

The first one apparently refers to the sacrifice of Ishmael under discussion. The second refers to the events, which took place after his birth. The grandfather had to offer him for sacrifice to fulfill a vow, but after divination, practice then common among the Arabs, one hundred camels were sacrificed in exchange of his life.

The above arguments are decisive enough, but for those who are not ready to consider the other side of the story one word in the Bible "Isaac" makes nonsense of all facts and truths. God have mercy on such people.

CHAPTER 7

THE HOLY TRINITY

The people of the Pacific are among the staunchest Trinitarians in the world. In some of the Islands any visitor who declares that he or she does not believe in Trinity would be considered a strange person. The reception for such person could be affected since some of the islanders may be offended that such a visitor is simply not a believer.

Remarkable changes are taking place all over the world. Theology and religious beliefs have not escaped these changes, sometimes for the better - as superstitions are discarded and sometimes for the worse and even disaster as people become more materialistic and less spiritual even denying the existence of the Great Creator and Sustainer of the Universe - God.

On the dogmatic aspect one important debate, which is going on in most parts of the world but generally with little impact in the islands, is the Holy Trinity. The meaning, reality and credibility as a genuine and important truth or unintentional fabrication by the lovers of Jesus in Christianity's formative age is now hotly debated.

Trinity with its implications is so far the biggest issue between Christianity and Islam. Is Jesus God? Is he man or the combination of God and man? This question is the most crucial issue between Islam and Christianity. There are two or three other issues, but the status of Jesus dwarfs them all. This is because in Islam the Unity of Allah, God, is total, unqualified and uncompromising. The Islamic concept of Monotheism does not permit or make allowance for the dogma of Trinity in any shade or colour. The essence of Islam is ALLAHU AHAD. Allah is One and Unique. Trinity in any sense, to Islam is nothing but a blasphemy. Otherwise vis-à-vis other great religions of the world, Islam and Christianity are the closest even as they are the two religions with the largest followers in the world.

We shall discuss the other differences as well, which are (a) Salvation and how to attain it (b) The prophethood of the Holy Prophet Mohammed S.A.W. Unlike Hinduism Buddhism and other eastern Religions Islam and Christianity have so much in common

including morality and even spiritual values. Early Christianity is not very different from Islam.

This is not surprising considering the fact that both great Religions originated from almost the same geographical region and also because God the Almighty is the source of both faiths. Muslims believe that the Jesus Christ was commissioned by Allah as a guide and prophet for the Jews but he was rejected and persecuted. The differences, which have become apparent between the two faiths, are mostly due to interpretations of the faith by religious leaders along the way.

Before we discuss these differences let us cast a glance at what unites the two most influential religions of the world.

CHRISTIANITY

- 1) Originated in the Middle East
- 2) Origins traced to Abraham
- 3) Believes in Angels
- 4) Believes in resurrection and the day of judgment and judgment of human deeds
- 5) The guilty shall be punished in hell.
- 6) Reward for the righteous in paradise, those who have been saved through the blood of Jesus
- 7) Believes in Jesus as a man and also God and the Holy Trinity
- 8) Believe that Jesus is the son of God
- 9) Believes in the second coming of Jesus to judge the world
- 10) Believes in one God in Trinity

ISLAM

- 1) Originated in the Middle East
- 2) Origins traced to Abraham
- 3) Believes in Angels
- 4) Believes in the resurrection of the soul and life after death and the day of judgment and judgment of human deeds

- 5) The guilty shall be punished in hell
- 6) Paradise as a reward for the righteous
- 7) Salvation as a result of righteous deeds and the mercy of Allah combined.
- 8) Believes that Jesus is a righteous prophet of God
- 9) Believes in the second coming of Jesus among the Muslims
- 10) The Belief in the Unity of God is the main essence of Islam.

THE HOLY TRINITY EXAMINED

The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God and yet there are not three Gods but One God - In This Trinity.... the persons are co-eternal and co-equal: all alike are Uncreated and Omnipotent" - The Catholic Encyclopedia

According to the Greek Orthodox Church Trinity is "the fundamental doctrine of Christianity". In their book Our Orthodox Faith the church has stated "God is triune The Father is totally God. The Son is totally God. The Holy spirit is totally God."

In brief, Trinity means Jesus, and the Holy Spirit like the Almighty God has no beginning or end they are eternal like God. Each of them is Almighty and Omnipotent. None is greater or lesser than other yet there is only one God.

The Enc. Americana comes to our rescue in this matter and says that Trinity is considered "beyond the grasp of human reason". The above quotations are very clear in meaning.

- 1) Trinity is the bedrock of Christianity (2) Jesus Christ a man, who was born to Mary about two thousand years ago, is totally and truly God the Holy Ghost (3) Yet, there is only one God not three (4) Don't make an attempt to understand it because you cannot. It is a mystery. Theological Dictionary by Catholic scholars Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler says;

"The Trinity is a mystery... in the strict sense... which could not be known without revelation and even after revelation cannot become wholly intelligible".

Obviously the door for discussion on the reality of Trinity has been shut. The fact is it is a belief so frail that it cannot survive a minor cross-examination. People therefore are told not to question it since it is a mystery.

In the past two centuries remarkable advances have been made in the knowledge of the origins of Christianity and the Holy Bible. There is no doubt, Scholars now know more about Christianity and the Holy Scriptures more than any other people except the apostles themselves and the Christians of the first three centuries. This is not an arrogant claim at all. The very fact that our great fathers after the third century could impose the dogma of Trinity on Christianity shows very serious flaws in their understanding of Jesus Christ and his role as a spokesman for God on the earth.

God the Almighty has nothing to do with Trinity; Jesus was not the author of Trinity or the Apostles. The foundation for it was laid in the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. under the chairmanship of the then half pagan half Christian Constantine. In this council the dogma of Trinity was hotly debated. The prosperous Alexandrian Church elders Hellenized as they were insisted on the validity of Trinity. The followers of the Saint Scholar Arius from Syria much nearer home to the origins of Christianity strongly opposed with solid arguments. Finally this dogma was passed after the intervention of Constantine who

"...had basically no understanding whatsoever of the questions that were being asked in Greek theology" - A short history of Christian Doctrine.

After this fatal formula was passed, all the elders were cajoled or threatened to sign or face terrible consequence. The Antiochean group on going back wrote bitterly to express their deep regret and sorrow for signing a document, which in their view was totally a fabrication. But the die was cast, the damage that was to derail the fine teachings of Jesus for thousands of years to come was done.

After this all books and document, which were contrary to the official stand of Trinity, were declared heretical and burned. Hundreds were thrown over the cliffs as heretics for not subscribing to the Holy Trinity. These are well known facts recorded in history books and encyclopedias.

Jesus Christ was therefore "promoted" from Son of God to The Equal of God in Nicaea. After Nicaea the debate continued for some time. Those who did not subscribe to the Divinity of Jesus had the upper hand for some time. The Emperor however stepped in and decisively restored the Nicaea declaration. Another council was conveyed at Constantinople in 381 C.E. to clarify the formula. It was in this council that The Holy Spirit was also promoted to be equal with the God the Father and God the Son.

Enc. Americana notes: "The full development of Trinitarianism took place in the West, in the scholasticism of the Middle ages when an explanation was undertaken in terms of philosophy and psychology"

The New Enc. Britannica says: "The creed was unknown to the Eastern Church until the 12th century..." This is to say that the formula and essence of Trinity was not an accepted part of Christianity in the Eastern churches until the 12th century.

"FOURTH CENTURY TRINITARIANISM WAS A DEVIATION FROM EARLY CHRISTIAN TEACHING" - THE ENC AMERICANA.

Going back to the beginning of this article briefly, Trinity is firmly rooted in some parts of the world including our islands of the pacific, a person who may not believe in Trinity in some of these islands is considered not a religious person - a *heathen* may be. The problem is in these islands, and many places in the world most people do not have access to research and scholarship of our modern Christian theologians. It will be a shock, for example for some of our island pastors to learn that some highly respected very good Christians in the West, from where they got their Christianity do not accept the Holy Trinity to be true. The courage of the modern Christian scholars is truly praiseworthy but let us remember that all what they are saying merely confirms what the Holy Quran has firmly stated about 1400 years ago.

Holy Quran Ch 4:172

"So believe in Allah and His Messengers and say not, 'They are Three' Desist it will be better for you Verily Allah is the only One God. Holy is He, far above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And sufficient is Allah as a Guardian".

Ch 5:117-118

"And when Allah will say; "O Jesus son of Mary, didst thou say to men 'Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? He will answer, Holy art Thou I could never say that to which I had no right. If I had said it Thou wouldst have surely known it.

Thou knowest what is in my mind and I know not what is in thy mind. It is Thou alone who art the Knower of all hidden things".

"I said nothing to them except that which Thou didst command me -Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord' and I was a witness over them as long as I remained among them, but since you dost cause me to die, Thou has been the watcher over them, and Thou art witness over all things;

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The designation of the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost as having independent existence equal with God and the third person in the Trinity is another major deviation from the Jewish Scriptures made by the Hellenized Christians.

"On the whole the New Testament like the old speaks of the Spirit as a divine energy or power" Catholic Dictionary.

The spirit of God is actually "power from God" or as some put it "Power from Above" which enters Holy men and prophets on their commission. It is the holy power that enables them to act, pronounce prophecies and work miracles but not independent of God. It

originates from God, it has no independent origin. It is never a person.

Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Samson, Jesus like all holy men received the Holy Spirit. Some like Jesus in a dramatic way. The spirit was seen entering him like a dove. Ezekiel says, "...and the spirit of the lord entered me..... son of man prophesize....

THE HOLY BIBLE AND TRINITY

Naturally the Bible is the first place to look for the validity or otherwise of Trinity.

The Old Testament

The Enc. of Religions notes:

"Theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity".

New Catholic Encyclopedia says:

"The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not taught in the old Testament"

The Jesuit Edmund Fortmann explains in his book "The Triune God."

"The Old Testament.... tells us nothing explicitly or by necessary implication of the Triune God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit...."

"There is no evidence that any sacred writer even suspected the existence of a (Trinity) within the Godhead.... Even to see in the Old Testament suggestions or foreshadowing or 'valid signs ' of the trinity of persons, is to go beyond the words and intent of the sacred writers."

Almost all those who have deep knowledge about the Bible now agree that there is nothing, not even a hint of Trinity in the Old Testament.

One often comes across some pastors who emotionally declare I don't care what scholars say. I know Jesus is God" When it is pointed out to them that these scholars are as good Christians as themselves some spiritedly claim that "these so called scholars are Satans who claim to know the Bible". Such pastors are quick in passing judgment but only God knows who the real Satan is.

What one would like to emphasize politely to such friends is that the same people who sold the concept of Trinity to your grandfathers and my grandfathers, the European fathers, priest, scholars missionaries are fast recanting, they are now telling us that they were wrong; they sold the wrong goods, they are now saying it openly on the T.V. the Radio,

the magazines and the newspapers loud and clear;

"There is no evidence that any sacred writer even suspected the existence of a Trinity within the Godhead"

- The Triune God.

THE PROPHETS

God, The All-knowing out of infinitive wisdom chooses some special people through whom He conveys His message and his will to mankind. They are the prophets or messengers of God, spokesmen if you like. If God wanted mankind to accept the Creed of Trinity He would have conveyed it to the prophets, surely Moses who brought the great commandments would have been commissioned by God to tell the world. Jesus would have made it the central point in his sermons and parables. None of the prophets, not a single one of them ever taught or subscribed to the Trinitarian dogma. Would God have chosen Constantine to head a forum, which was to be the recipients of such an important message!

The Holy Quran has cleared all the prophets of God from the Creed of Trinity. The message of the prophets recorded in the Bible is also the same, God is One, Indivisible and there is no room for Trinity.

HOW TRINITY CAME ABOUT

Surely those who formed the Creed of Trinity might have also been well versed in the Bible and good Christians, so what went wrong. This is sound statement. What happened is, as pointed out earlier, (see polygamy) Christianity after getting out of confines of the monotheist Judaism especially after the sacking of Jerusalem found permanent home later in the pagan Greek-Roman areas. The concept of Trinity was known in Platonic philosophy. It is a usual phenomenon with religions to adopt some of the traditions and ideas of the newly converted nations.

THE NEW SCHAFF - HERZONG ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE records: "The doctrines of the logos and the Trinity received their shape from Greek Fathers, who were much influenced, directly or indirectly, by the Platonic philosophy ... That errors and corruptions crept into the church from this source cannot be denied"

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The ordinary church attender, the Christian has taken it for granted that the New Testament teaches the Holy Trinity especially since our clergymen often quote verses from the gospels and the writings of St. Paul to preach the Trinity. Unfortunately a careful examination of such verses makes it clear that our clergymen are guilty of gross misinterpretation of these texts or verses. Sometimes poor translation from the Greek Text is to blame but the most important factor in this error is the pre-conceived belief in Trinity that colour the judgment of our Sunday School Teachers.

They see Trinity, in every verse and every chapter. This reminds one of a popular joke. A very hungry student was asked to answer what was the equal of two plus two. He promptly replied "Four loaves of bread" A pastor looks at the world with the eyes of Trinity. It is firmly imprinted in the body and soul. Like the hungry student he

sees (bread) Trinity in every verse of the Bible. Unfortunately those who imprinted this dogma and their descendants or representatives are now telling the world loud and clear - Sorry, Trinity is a fabrication, which has no Biblical support Old or New Testament.

The Encyclopedia of Religions has this to say: "Theologians agree that the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity"

Jesuit Fortmann wrote: "The New Testament writers ... give us no formal or formulated doctrine of the Trinity, explicit teaching that in One God there are three co-equal divine persons. Nowhere do we find any Trinitarian doctrine of three distinct subjects of divine life and activity in the same Godhead".

Yale University Professor E Washburn Hopkins wrote: "To Jesus and Paul the doctrine of Trinity was apparently unknown ... They say nothing about it" - Origin and Evolution of Religion

Protestant theologian Karl Barth, Historian Arthur Weigall and eminent Christian scholars have all written similar views. The Rev. Don Cupit of Emmanuel College Cambridge in a T.V. interview stated flatly "Jesus was wholly a man but not God"

In view of all these evidences anyone who clings to this belief after knowing the facts does so at his or her own risk. God has opened our eyes; it is our own Christian scholars who are telling us that Trinity is a mistake.

THE ALLEGED TRINITARIAN TEXTS

Matt 28:19 "Go ye therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

The three mentioned together does not in anyway prove that the three are equal in power and glory or in essence, the three are not the same even as Tom Dick and Harry are not the same just because they are often mentioned together.

Remember, Jesus before he received the Holy Spirit had no power to perform any miracle. It was when God sent down the Holy Spirit that Jesus was "energized" or empowered to do great things. Both the Holy Spirit and Jesus are subject to the All Powerful God, the Father. There is no equality. The Holy Quran Ch. 13:39 says;

"And, indeed We sent Messengers before thee, and We gave them wives and children.

And it is not possible for a Messenger to bring a sign save by the command of Allah. For every term there is a Divine decree".

John 5:7 FOR THERE ARE THREE THAT BEAR RECORD IN HEAVEN, THE FATHER, THE WORD AND THE HOLY GHOST; AND THESE THREE ARE ONE.

The above verse is almost universally considered a fabrication; therefore it has been taken out from most editions that are coming out now, and why not, simply because the most ancient and reliable manuscripts do not have these words. It seems some later Trinitarians got it installed somehow in the text. There is no need to discuss it therefore.

Other verses like John 10:30 "I and the father are One" often quoted to support Trinity is also a misunderstanding. Like the Jews who were the audience our later days Christians also grossly misunderstood Jesus. The Jews were even ready to meet out the punishment for blasphemy upon Jesus by stoning him to death but Jesus explained further; up to verse 35, which clearly shows that, he did deny divinity for himself. "I only call myself the son of God, in your Scriptures your righteous Judges are even called Gods, and in this case you do not see any blasphemy in it, how do you get offended by my harmless statement, (explanation of Jesus words mine). This particular occasion was the right time for Jesus to set the records straight. If He was real God he won't have been afraid to say it due to the threat of execution by stones! All through the Bible the Almighty God says it clear and loud and I am your God - you shall have no other God beside me.

In order to understand what Jesus meant by the statement 'I and the father are One' one should also study the following saying of Jesus as well

John;17:21 John;14:20 Ephesians;4:6 It only means I and the father are one in purpose. We want the disciples to be righteous and have faith.

"In the beginning was the word" ... These verses are the supposed to be the strongest point for the Trinitarians, what most of them do not realize is that there is apparent mistranslation of the vital two words "God" and "a god" in Greek 'Ton-theos', a God and the second 'Ho-theos' Almighty God". (John 1:1-10).

The best translation for John 1:1 - should be something like this: ... the word was with God and the word was godly or godlike. The Jehovah witness Bible put it this way ... "And the word was a god" meaning divine or of divine origin, but certainly not the same as the Almighty God.

Joseph Henry Thayer a renowned Biblical scholar wrote:

"The logos was divine not the divine Being Himself"

The Jesuit John L. Mechenzie wrote in his Dictionary of the Bible

"John 1:1 should rigorously be translated ... the word was a divine being.

Just as we have Devine Book, Devine intervention Devine plan, Devine grace and Devine punishment etc. but which do not in any way make all of these God or equal with God, Logos or Devine word is not God himself or equal with God. This is what the biblical scholars are telling us

These are all too academic may be. What we should all bear in mind however is, these four verses were written by the author of the Gospel according to St John as a prologue or introduction to the gospel, these are not the words of God or even Jesus quoted. It is well known that Philo the Jewish philosopher wrote almost the same

words. Some scholars are even of the opinion that John might have quoted Philo *ad verbatim*.

To close this chapter, what is important to remember is that even if some writers have called Jesus God, Jesus himself never, not even once made such a claim. On the contrary he was always careful to maintain the superiority of God, in this is Jesus greatness and truthfulness. A higher authority sent him and he never even once failed to acknowledge this fact. He prayed always and solicited the assistance of the Almighty, a ridiculous act if he himself was God. The Almighty God, the Real God never prays, pray to whom?

Here are some quotations from the Bible that totally contradict Trinity.

- (1) Jesus had limited knowledge Mark 13:32
- (2) Jesus was exalted by God, he was not exalted before that, Philippians 2:9
- (3) Jesus according to Christians died for 3 days, God never dies - Hbk. 1:12
- (4) Jesus cried my God why has Thou forsaken me, to whom was he appealing if he himself was God Mark 15:34
- (5) In the garden of Gethsemane the prayer with tears and sweat point to the falseness of Trinity Mt 26:36-46 God in tears agony and helpless? oh no!
- (6) Jesus has limited authority even in his kingdom Mt 20:21-23
- (7) Jesus performed miracles? Indeed, but remember Elijah, Elisha, Moses Etc

Throughout human history people who did extraordinary things or accomplished great feats for their people have often been declared or even worshipped as gods by their people. The Egyptians in the ancient past considered their pharaohs as gods. Even the Romans thought that when their Emperors died they became Gods.

Constantine could not therefore understand why some church elders were reluctant to confer this title on the truly great Jesus. For him and the semi pagan Romans who later became the custodian of Christianity, there was nothing wrong in Jesus being a God. A man/God was nothing strange to their national character

Confucius was another great person who after thousands of years was finally promoted to be God officially together with God of Heaven and God of Earth. Unfortunately for Confucius the revolution of Sun Yat Sen took away this title. Confucius unlike Jesus was hardly a God for more than a dozen years.

"The ancients made wrong use of John 10:30 to prove that Christ is of the same essence with the Father" -John Calvin.

Let us remember that the Holy Scripture has used the word God - Hebrew "Elohim" for Moses "I have made you *God* unto Pharaoh. Aaron is your prophet" Ex. 7:1. Some Bibles have used small letter g for God in this particular verse. There is no justification whatsoever for the use of small letter "g" in this particular verse for "God" as we find in some Bibles. The Hebrew Elohim is the same as "God".

Also refer to Ps 8:5 Ps. 82:1-6. In the same way the expected king in Isaiah 9:6 (Messiah?) is called Mighty God. To the monotheist Jew all the above does not contradict the first commandment. They are only titles of honour and nearness to God, nothing more. Wherever a king or a human being has been given the title of God no Jew would have considered him to be equal or essentially the same with the Almighty God of the first commandment. That was exactly what Jesus tried to explain to the Jews in John. 10: 30. 35

Finally we close this chapter with the emphatic demolition of his alleged divinity by Jesus himself by his saying;

"I ascend to my Father and your Father my God and Your God"
John 20:17

JESUS THE SON OF GOD.

Another unfortunate deviation from the true personality of Jesus is the misuse of the Biblical phrase "Jesus the son of God" a son of God. They emphasize his son ship so strongly as if Jesus is the only son of God. No one should have any quarrel with them if the term son of God is used in its original Jewish context. God is not physical and does not have a son in the physical sense. The birth of Jesus without the agent of male intervention is certainly a miracle but it does not make God his father physically. That will be the worst kind of blasphemy. There are four ways a person can become a son to another person. a) physical son b) step son c) adopted son d) son of common usage The first three are legally accepted by the society. In the case of common usage any boy or girl whose age is far below ones age or whose age may be equal to the age of one's children may be addressed as my son or my daughter. This is quite common in many cultures. It is often used affectionately for the young.

The Jews in their language additionally, called the righteous or the anointed king son of God or son of the Most High. The Bible is full of such Jewish usage. A classic example is found in the Gospels. After witnessing the miraculous event that took place on the cross the Roman soldier is reported to have said the following;

Matthew 27:54. ...Surely he was the son of God

Mark 15:39. ...Surely this man was the son of God

Luke 23:47 surely this was a righteous man.

Apparently there is a contradiction here, what did the soldier actually say, 'son of God' or 'righteous man' for a Jew reading the three statements there is no contradiction. The value is the same. It means the same.

If anointed kings and holy men are called sons of God and who deserved this title more than the Messiah or the Christ the anointed one of Israel!

In any case Jesus has been called **Son of man** more than eighty times in the Bible (*AID TO BIBLE UNDERSTANDING JEHOVAH*)

WITNESS) He has been called son of God less than half a dozen times but the Sunday school teacher totally ignores the son of man as if it is not in the same Bible which has called him son of God on a few occasions!

And Jesus said unto them the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the son of man hath nowhere to lay his head. Matt. 8;20

SONS OF GOD IN THE BIBLE.

Job: 1; 6 2; 1 Job: 38; 7 Gen: 6; 2

Israel my first born Exodus 4; 22 Hosea: 1:10

I am a Father to Israel Ephraim is my first born Jer.31: 20

To David: Thou art my son this day I have begotten thee. Psalm: 2; 7

Solomon I CHR.:22; 10

Jesus called peacemakers children of God Matt: 5; 44

St. Paul says all that are led by the spirit of God are sons of God. Romans 8;14.

There are hundreds of sons of God in the Bible and they all mean the same, righteous, people including the Messiah, Jesus the chosen one of God.

Chapter 8

SALVATION

Millions of people all over the world in the past and today are following different ways, paths, religions and philosophies in search of the precious gem called Salvation. People give their lives willingly with a hope of attaining Salvation. People leave their loved ones and suffer untold hardship and deprivation; they seek salvation. So what is this Salvation? Salvation in simple terms means –

1. To be free from sin
2. To be saved from the anger of God
3. To have eternal life.
4. To establish or re-establish close link with The Creator

These are the meaning of Salvation generally accepted by the religions. Now, how to achieve this Salvation is of a great controversy. Since salvation is so important to you, and I it is only sensible that we do not make a mistake in our quest for it but make sure we are on the right track for salvation. Remember that a man lives but once, you die and there is no return. Suppose you make a mistake and choose a wrong way to salvation what are you going to do after you die? Can we ask God to give us another chance so that we may come back to rectify our mistakes. I would like to caution you, never, to take anything for granted in the search of salvation. All paths to salvation must be scrutinised with the Scriptures and also reason. The Christian concept of Salvation, which has been taken for granted by millions for the past 2000 years, is now under great stress and close scrutiny by well-intentioned and practicing Christian scholars. People whom one has no authority to brand as faithless but good believers like anyone else who seeks the truth.

The real assessment of Christian salvation has come about in the past century because of the discovery of many more ancient writings, which throw more light on the origin of Christianity than our ancestors had access to. These findings are so revolutionary that it

has become imperative for Christian scholars to revise the Holy Scriptures again and again, and this is the reason why we have so many versions of the Bible available in the market today.

In the preface of the Revised Standard Version of the King James Bible which is almost universally accepted by all the Christian denominations and scholars have frankly admitted that

"The King James version contains absurd mistranslation and accumulated errors of the past centuries,"

So much that after the discovery of better and near original manuscripts they have no choice but to revise it or edit it, in the plain language they had to "correct" it. Some claim that these variations are minor but most scholars do not think so. The Encyclopedia Britt says that 30,000 changes were made in the Revised Standard Version from the King James Version, out of these 5000 are basic changes not minor.

Moreover in the matter of religion or salvation we cannot afford minor mistakes or mistranslation. What is minor to you and I may not be minor in the sight of God, they are potential misleaders, in the matter of salvation. We therefore must be extra careful and pray to God Almighty, the only God, to guide us in our search for salvation.

SALVATION - HOW TO ATTAIN IT

We all agree on what salvation is, it is only how to attain it that is the problem. Since Christianity is the world's greatest religion in respect of numerical strength let us examine the Christian salvation.

According to Christianity anybody born of man and woman has no salvation, simply because she or he is born sinful. This is not due to a sin committed prenatal, but because he inherited it from the parents even as the parents inherited. It is a disease which goes all the way back to Adam and Eve the original progenitors of human race. Christians say Adam and Eve originated sin and introduced it to the world by eating the forbidden fruit thus contaminating themselves. Now, this contamination, sin, is automatically transferred to mankind like genes as we all come from the first sinners. This dogma is known as original sin. The dogma continues that, God wants to forgive

because He is Merciful but His Justice demands that He does not forgive without punishment. Adam and Eve were therefore summarily punished.

- (a) They were driven away from the garden in which they lived peacefully.
- (b) Adam was made to toil and sweat greatly before he could feed himself and his family
- (c) Eve was to suffer the terrible pain at childbirth.
- (d) Adam and Eve to be under constant threat from their alleged deceiver, snake, biting them wherever possible. The snake too must be under constant threat from Adam and his children for foiling God's plan.

After all this God's anger was not abated, not, He was not satiated, He decreed that Adam's unborn progeny must also suffer the consequence of Adam's blunder. God being 'Merciful' wanted to bring about the end of this suffering. The only way justice may be tampered with mercy was for someone special to die for the sins of Adam and all mankind. This expiation is known as Atonement. The person who must atone for the sins must himself be totally free from sin. Since there was no man⁹ who was free from sins, God's only son Jesus offered to die to atone for the sins of mankind.

Jesus therefore willingly became a man and died an accursed death on the cross for this sin of man. Anyone who believes that Jesus Christ died for him or her has salvation. This dogma is preached in hundreds of thousands of churches all over the world. It has been repeated so often that there is no questioning of its reliability. It has been accepted in such a way that solid scriptural support and firm evidence for this dogma is not seriously perused. Believe that Jesus died for your sin and you will be saved, so simple, so easy.

After carefully examining this dogma its credibility becomes difficult to sustain.

⁹This is apparently not true because even at the time of his birth, Jesus had at least one contemporary who was free from sin according to the Bible. This was John the Baptist.

This sounds more a country fable than a religious truth. The true Scriptures do not support this novel salvation at all. May God help those who have the patience to listen to the arguments.

ARGUMENTS

There have been hundreds of prophets and righteous men and women from Adam to Jesus. Not one of them, not even a single prophet preached this type of salvation. On contrary a clear simple and more sensible way to salvation is expounded in the pages of the Bible, the teaching of the Prophets and sermons of Jesus Christ. What has become Christian salvation is also found in the Bible but it is conspicuously absent from the books of Moses and prophetic books and even the sermons and parables of Jesus himself.

You will find this dogma of Jesus dying for our sins almost exclusively in the letters of Saint Paul the true founder of the Christianity according to modern students of religions. This belief or philosophy was first preached as sermon in churches but finally found its way in the Scripture and later commissioned when the letters of Paul to different churches were made Holy Scriptures and declared infallible inspiration of God. The facts that Saint Paul did not claim that his advises to the churches were words of God are not important to our Christian friends.

Let us first examine some of the verses from the Bible, which are said to support the Christian version of salvation. Isaiah 53; Mark 10-45; 1 Tim 1:15; Hebrew 9:27,28. The sayings in the last two quotations above are attributed to Saint Paul.

Isaiah 53: Let it be clear that it was the Jews who were expecting the Messiah (Christ). Though it is said that the Messiah like most servants of God was to suffer, the element of dying to carry the sins of the world is a novel introduction into the meaning of the prophecies by Christians to which the Jews who are aware of the prophecies, totally reject. Most credible Christian commentators on these prophecies clearly say that the language of the prophecy especially ISAIAH 53, points to a nation rather than individual. Please refer to the interpreters Bible, also Peaks commentary under ISAIAH 53. To make this chapter to prove the dogma of Christian

salvation one will have to mutilate this whole text beyond recognition.

In short ISAIAH 53, instead of being the basis for the Christian dogma of salvation is in fact an unwilling chapter forced in support of a dogma created by the Church. On the other hand if we close our eyes to the facts and accept the Christian interpretation that the "suffering servant" is Jesus, ISAIAH 53 will contradict other equally strong Christian dogmas and fundamentals. For example, this man in ISAIAH 53 was to be a mere servant of God, never in real sense or by implication the so-called God incarnate. He was to be a servant of God and not God himself. Secondly the verse speaks of the servant being wounded and bruised even though there is a vague mention of death in some translations. Thirdly the suffering servant was decreed emphatically to live long enough to see his progeny. He simply had to live long to see his children and his grandchildren physically. On the contrary Christian dogma does not allow for Jesus surviving the suffering (crucifixion) not to talk of raising a family. The contradictions are so many that we have to rule out ISAIAH 53 as basis for Salvation found on the death of Jesus to save mankind with his blood. Other verses in the Old Testament quoted to support salvation through blood are simply dubious.

In any case Christianity claims that those who preached this novel salvation were inspired, it is hard to understand why God did not inspire much greater people, the prophets, not even Jesus Christ was inspired to preach this salvation.

Dr. Meyer of Zurich University writes - "If by Christianity we understand faith in Christ as a heavenly Son of God who did not belong to earthly, but who lived in the Divine likeness and glory, who came down from heaven to the earth and who entered humanity and took upon himself a human form through a virgin, that He might make propitiation for men's sins by His own blood on the cross, who was awakened from death and raised to the right hand of God, as the Lord of His own people, who believe in Him, who hears their prayers guides and leads them, who moreover, dwells and works personally on each of them, who will come again with the clouds of heavens to judge the world, who will cast down, all the foes of God and will bring His own people with Him unto the home of heavenly light so

that they may become like His glorified body, if this is Christianity, then such Christianity was found by St. Paul and not by our Lord."

NEW TESTAMENT

When we scan the Gospels we will come back empty handed for reliable and credible references in the sermon of *Jesus himself* to support the dogma of his blood in exchange for the salvation of mankind. The only verse which somehow is quoted to support this dogma from Jesus himself is Mark 10:45. About this verse also many Christian scholars doubt the authenticity of the latter part of the verse, which is so vital to sustain Christian salvation i.e. but to give his life as ransom for many. The highly respected commentators of the Interpreters Bible after explaining that many scholars believe that this vital clause was added by someone later and that it does not form part of the saying of the Lord Jesus originally, goes on to argue that most probably it is from one of the sources of Mark, but again turns round to declare boldly ... "this saying does not formulate a theology of atonement but it is one of data upon which any theology of the atonement must inevitably rest..." Interpreters Bible under Mark 10:45 has this to say;

In clear terms these Christian scholars are telling us three things:

- a) This clause "to give His life as ransom for many" is by no means accepted as authentic by all Christian scholars.
- b) Even if it is authentic saying of Jesus, it does not in any way make the atonement dogma true or factual.
- c) Despite the unreliability of this verse, any dogma of Atonement must take the verse as one of the main pillars. We have no other choice.

Peaks commentary surprisingly devotes few lines on this important verse; the commentator limits himself to the rejection of the view of those who have said that this clause was due to Pauline influence. 'Peaks' clearly avoids the fundamental arguments about this verse.

Apart from this Mark 10:45 you would not find any other saying of Jesus which explicitly lays the basis for this dogma in the Gospels. It indeed abounds in the letters of Paul but the question is why was Jesus not inspired to teach us such an important and vital dogma of salvation but rather Paul who was not even one of the twelve Disciples?

SALVATION II

If all the prophets are true and if all of them come from the same source, God then their message must also be the same or identical. They should not preach to us contradictory sermons. Conflicting statements on such an important issue as salvation will leave mankind bewildered and confused. Fortunately for mankind this is not the case. All the prophets taught the same simple, clear and straightforward way to salvation. First and foremost none of the prophets from Adam to Jesus knew or preached original sin. You will therefore, find no theology of original sin in the Old Testament or among the Jews.

From Adam to Moses to Jesus if there was nothing known of inherited sin or original sin how come it suddenly appeared after Jesus? Like Trinity this is another major excess by early Christians.

The dogma that Adam's sin has been transferred to mankind automatically cannot be substantiated in light of - Luke 1:6,15

Zachariah, his wife Elizabeth and John the Baptist were all children of Adam, how did they manage to become righteous, free from sins before the sacrifice of Jesus? There has never been a tangible solution to this riddle. Never mind what the pastors say about them, before God, these people were free from sin and that is what matters.

THE PROPHETIC TEACHINGS ON SALVATION

The prophets are unanimous about the true way to salvation. Repent from your sins turn to God with humility, be faithful to the commands of God and you will have eternal life - salvation.

Salvation according to the prophets, come only from God. The philosophy of salvation is somewhat between the mercy of God and man's faithfulness. When a man totally surrenders himself to the will of God, this action on his part invites the salvation of God.

It is not a commodity to be obtained by game of chance or good luck. One has to be faithful to God and this effort will invite salvation from God. This is the prophets' teaching on salvation in brief. Here are a few examples -

Guide me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art the God of my salvation: For thee do I wait all the day.

PSALMS 68:20

Moses made it clear that the father cannot die for the son likewise the son cannot be killed for the father Deut. 24;16

God is unto us a God of deliverance;

And unto Jehovah the Lord belongs escape from death. PSALMS 85:9

Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear him,

That glory may dwell in our land. ISAIAH 12: 2

Also unto thee O God belongeth mercy for thou rendest to every man according to his own work Psalm 62:12

He that covers his sins shall not prosper but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy Proverbs 28 13

But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered, in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Ezekiel 18:24

Ezekiel 18: 21-23

But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that, which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Ezekiel 18:21-23

WAS JESUS TO DIE FOR THE SINS OF MANKIND

The Christian churches preach that the very mission of Jesus was to die an accursed death for the sins of mankind. This is a falsehood but it has been repeated so often that it has become an absolute truth to most people. This reminds me of the story of the Raja (an Indian King or Prince). A man was sentenced to death for a crime. When the noose was put around his neck it was found that this neck was too thin for the noose, so the sentence could not be carried out. The executioners reported the case to the King. The Raja was surprised at the 'stupidity' of the executioners. He said, "This is very simple matter, why can't you look for someone whose neck will fit in the noose. Hang him in his place and you have no problem at all." The executioners regretted for their stupidity. They went out and quickly seized a fat man with the fitting neck and hanged him. Justice therefore was done!

The whole story of Jesus, an innocent man hanged for the sin of Adam is not different from his Raja's justice. Adam committed the sin but for some reasons Adam could not be hanged God put the noose around the neck of his own son Jesus Christ! Or as in Raja's justice, the cross won't fit Adam it was fit for Jesus.

It is interesting to note that the first person to offer his neck willingly for the sins of the people was Moses. God rejected this. What is justice to some people is not justice to God. Please see Exodus 32:30-33. The prophet Ezekiel makes it clear that in matter of salvation even most righteous prophets cannot help their own sons Ezekiel 14:12-15, 20.

THE TRUE ATONEMENT

In the Blacks Bible Dictionary the learned Christian authors write about atonement as follows, "**The basic assumption of atonement are that through man's fault, the natural relation between God and man is broken and that this communion can be restored by**

the removal of sin. The means of restoration in the Old Testament references are considered to be by payment of compensation for wrong in sacrifice or offerings, by the performance of ritual pleasing to God, by the acceptance of suffering, by intercessory prayer (Gen. 18:23-32) and occasionally in the prophetic writing by repentance".

Now the question is did Jesus come to change the teachings of the prophets on atonement as explained above? Please read Matthew 5:17-20 "Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. I have not come to do away with them but to make their teachings come true... "Remember that as long as heaven and earth last, not the least point nor the smallest detail of the law will be done away... not until the end of all things. So then, whoever disobeys even the least important of the commandment and teach others to do the same, will be least in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand whoever obeys the law and teach others to do the same, will be great in the kingdom of heaven. I tell you, then, that you will be able to enter the kingdom of heaven only if you are more faithful than the teachers of the law and Pharisees in doing what God requires."

Again Jesus was emphatic Matt.16:27

Even St Paul the main advocate of this dogma often contradicts himself. Please see Galatians 6:4-7 1Tim.6:18 -19.

JESUS CHRIST AND SALVATION

Jesus Christ was a great Messenger of God and since he is the center of the whole controversy about Salvation our study cannot be complete without seeking his teachings on Salvation.

The first answer to this is what Jesus told us in Matthew 5:17. In very clear terms, he said he had come not to condemn the teaching of prophets. Secondly did Jesus claim that He was sent purposely to be slaughtered for the sins of others? When we scan the Gospel we find nothing to support this view from the sermon of Jesus himself. Others attributed this blood atonement to him, he did not teach this himself.

From the Gospels it is quite clear that Jesus' teachings on Salvation were consistent with what the prophets taught.

The famous verse which every good Christian knows by heart John 3:16. "For God love the world so much that He sent His only begotten son that whoever believe in Him may not perish but have eternal life." In the new translation Christians have substituted "Only begotten son" with His only son". After many centuries they have realized that begetting is an animal or human act, God simply does not beget. This is what the holy Quran has been saying for the past fourteen centuries. Holy Quran CH. 112 "Proclaim, He is Allah, the single, Allah, the self existing and besought of all. He begets not, nor is he begotten, and there is none equal to Him in His attributes."

John 3:16. This is a straightforward verse you do not have to be a scholar to agree that there is nothing about his sacrifice on the cross for salvation in John. 3:16 eternal life is in believing in him, as what? as a son of God, as the messenger of God and the Messiah. This saying means by accepting Jesus as what He claims to be and by following His teachings you will have eternal life, this is what John 3:16 is all about. There is nothing about his dying an accursed death to atone for anybody's sins.

The following points are worth recording -

1. When Jesus started his mission, his first sermon was "REPENT FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND" Matthew 4:17. This is in total agreement with the teachings of the prophets before him.
2. Jesus acknowledged the presence of many righteous persons around him during his ministry who did not really need him. He was more concerned with those who had no chance of salvation. "Jesus said those who are healthy do not need a physician but who are sick do. I have come to call not the righteous persons, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:31-32

3. Amongst the teaching of Jesus on salvation one of the strongest which contradicts Christian salvation is Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone saying to me Lord, Lord, will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven but only those who do what my Father in Heaven wants them to do." In this saying Jesus is quite emphatic, salvation come only by doing the will of God who is the true source of salvation. Nothing to do with his blood!
4. Another strong indication that Christian salvation is alien to Jesus is what we find in Luke 18; 18 - 19; Mark 10:17-20. "A Jewish leader asked Jesus, good teacher what must I do to receive eternal life? Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. No one is good except God alone, you know the commandment do not commit adultery, do not commit murder" Here is straight forward question to Jesus; Lord tell us how to get salvation, Jesus confirms and concords with what the prophets have been saying, obey the commandment of God, you will have salvation.

As if Jesus already knew the intention of the Jews, he saw murder in their eyes therefore he brought the commandment thou shall not kill before most of the others.

Also please refer to 6:40-47-63-68

SOME UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

- a) If someone must die for our sins and if Jesus came to die for our sins, what happened to those who lived before Jesus? Who died for their sins?
- b) Are all those before Jesus who did not enjoy his accursed death all deprived of salvation? If yes then why did Jesus wait for millions of generations to perish before offering this great sacrifice? What does he have against generation before him?
- c) If the blood of Jesus is vital for salvation, this will mean Moses and other prophets have no salvation

because they simply had no opportunity to avail the blood of Jesus. They must therefore be sinful men. How come God chose sinners as prophets to lead people?

- d) On the other hand if they were righteous persons, despite the fact that they could not avail the blood of Jesus shed on the cross, how on the earth did they manage to become righteous, free from sins?
- e) What is the evidence that the way thorough which people before Jesus had salvation, is now closed forever simply because Jesus has come. We want evidence not empty sermons. Did Jesus claim that by his coming the former door to salvation as explained by God in the Bible is closed temporarily or for eternity? Where did he say that? Jesus was a great servant of God. Let us not attribute to him what he never taught. Salvation lies in obeying the commandments of God, by accepting all his prophets including Jesus and by following their teachings. Jesus cannot die for sins committed by you, you have to carry you own cross.

Finally I would like to remind you of the words of the great prophet Jeremiah "when that time comes, people will no longer say the parents ate the sour grapes, but the children got the sour taste. Instead whoever eats sour grapes will have his own teeth set on edge, and everyone will die because of his own sin. Jeremiah 31:29-31. This is the time, we are only reminding you.

Again Jesus Christ also said in John 17:3 "Now this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God and also Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Salvation lies in knowing and believing that there is only One true God 'and also accepting Jesus as the messenger of God.

May God the Almighty bless us all and, guide us to the truth. May God who is the only source of salvation grant us this eternal life. Amen.

EASTER AND AHOBAA ANY DIFFERENCE?

The concept of a hero dying for the tribe, nation or a people is not the monopoly of Christianity. It is so widespread among so many peoples including pagan Rome and Greece.

Among my own Mfantse people of the Central Coastal Region of Ghana, well before the advent of Christianity, there existed a festival called *Ahobaa*. During my school days this festival was very much alive and celebrated with solemnity though it seems to be dying down now.

It is said that a plague or some sort of an epidemic played havoc with our people. They were dying in their thousands. All efforts to stop it failed. The Shaman or fetish priest was asked to consult the gods to find out what were the causes and the remedy for this calamity.

The gods revealed that the people had sinned or annoyed the gods that was why they were being punished. To remedy this, to atone for their misbehaviour and re-establish the cordial relationship with the gods, the gods demanded the blood of one young healthy man. That person should be killed and his blood shed in order to appease the gods. When the priest made this pronouncement, silence and sorrow descended on my people. Men became dumb and women wailed.

One young man called Ahor stood up and offered to die for the people to atone for their misdeeds. He was therefore killed and the gods were appeased and actually according to the narration the pestilence disappeared. I am narrating this first hand from my own tribe, my own people.

Every year the Mfantse people remembered the sacrifice of Ahor and celebrated the *Ahobaa*, which means remembering congratulating Ahor for the supreme sacrifice to save the nation. In the 21st century my people have mostly substituted Ahobaa with Easter, as most have become Christians. Many of my people interestingly condemn Ahobaa as a pagan rite but celebrate Easter with fervour, church service and all the festivity that would shame the priest of Ahobaa! Isn't every import from Europe better than the African after centuries of colonialism! Essentially what is the difference between Ahobaa and Easter other than the fact that one originated in Israel and came

to us through the Europeans and the other on the coast of West Africa? Fundamentally is there any difference between the two festivals. Please draw your own conclusions and let us be objective.

SALVATION ACCORDING TO ISLAM

There is continuity between the message of the Biblical prophets and the Holy Quran especially on the fundamental issue of Salvation. The prophets of the Bible did not preach original sin. The Jews owners of the prophetic books reject original sin. The important difference between Islam and Christianity here is that Islam also totally rejects the dogma of original sin The Holy Quran says:

"Surely, We have created man in the best make" Ch. 95; 5

According to this verse a child is born perfect and free from all sins.

The Holy Prophet of Islam also explained that a child is born pure and free of sins. It is the influence of the parents and environment that determine his belief, the prophet explained.

There is no room therefore, in Islam for the sins of Adam to pass on to his progeny. The Holy Quran confirms what the prophets taught e.g. Ezek. 14:12-15, Jeremiah 31: 29-31. Sins are not transferable.

"And every man's works have we fastened to his neck; and on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring out for him a book. Sufficient is Thy own soul as reckoner against thee this day'. He who follows the right way follows it only for the good of his own soul; and he who goes astray only to his own loss. ***And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another.*** And we never punish until we have sent a Messenger."

Holy Quran 17:14 - 16.

Jesus, Moses or Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on them all) cannot therefore carry the sins on behalf of any one. Each one must carry their cross is literally true according to his verse.

There is also difference in the concept of what sin is, According to Islam sin is committed only when one deliberately defies or breaks

the commandments of Allah. If a person unknowingly or as a result of uncontrollable circumstances breaks the commandments of Allah, this will not be counted as a sin against him, this is why when a Muslim is forced by circumstances to eat what is forbidden for example to save one's life, it is not reckoned as sin against him.

..."But he who is driven by necessity, being neither disobedient nor exceeding the limit, it shall be no sin for him. Surely Allah is most forgiving, Merciful" Ch. 2: 174.

Adam according to the Holy Quran made a mistake in eating the forbidden tree, but every mistake is not a sin.

The Holy Quran clears Adam of intentionally breaking the commands of God.

"And Verily, We had made a covenant with Adam beforehand but he forgot, and We found in him no resolve to disobey".

Holy Quran Ch. 20: 116

The question now is if Adam and Eve indeed did not commit a sin, why were they punished? Why were they made to suffer?

If you lose your paycheck on the way by mistake you suffer the whole month even though you won't be prosecuted as a criminal. You suffer for the carelessness and go hungry for the whole month, you are deprived of many needs but you don't carry the label of a criminal. Adam's case is similar this explains his punishment of expulsion from the garden, even though according to Islam he was not a criminal or sinful, the consequence of Adam's lapse is that he lost the garden. He prayed to God to forgive the lapse and mistake on his part and also his wife. God overlooked this mistake and they were not recorded as sinful. Therefore the sweat and struggle of Adam to feed, the pain of Eve and her daughters at childbirth, the pursuit of snakes to kill them by men and the occasional biting of sons of Adam by the snakes according to Islam has nothing to do with the alleged sins of Adam.

It has already been proved from the Holy Quran that sin like righteousness is not transferable, it is unlike genes. Each and every one carries their own sins.

Now what does Islam say about how to get rid of sin since Islam does not accept the blood of Jesus or the dogma of atonement by his death on the cross? How can we get free of our sins - those we commit ourselves? The Islamic teachings on this question also confirm the prophetic teachings. When Jesus preached, *"repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand"* he was also echoing the teachings of the Quran, which was yet to come. In Islam one may get rid of every type of sin by sincere repentance.

"And those who, even when they commit a foul deed or wrong themselves, remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah and do not knowingly persist in what they do.

"It is they whose reward is forgiveness from the Lord..."

Holy Quran Ch. 3; 136-137

Islam also accepts the Biblical¹⁰ (prophetic) atonement for sins with fasting, charity, good deeds pleasing to God, assistance to the poor and needy etc. However all these deeds must be preceded by sincere repentance.

Even though God has allowed the sacrifice of animals, the Good God has never sanctioned the shedding of Human blood for atonement. Thus when Abraham was stopped from actually sacrificing his dear and only Son, it was a sign that human sacrifice has never been sanctioned by the Merciful God in history anytime, for the atonement of sins. This was an evil practice among the peoples of some cultures not supported by revealed religions.

¹⁰ But not the Pauline "blood of Jesus on the cross for atonement

Chapter 9

THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD (S.A.W.)

"The 100 great men whose names have been immortalized in the history of man, the Greatest of them is Muhammad the Prophet of Allah Because Muhammad is the only person in history who attained absolute success in religious and worldly affairs He became a perfect leader politically and a perfect commander militarily and excellent model religiously. Thirteen Centuries after his demise, his influence continues waxing stronger with ever-fresh vigor."

Micheal Hart - THE GREATEST 100 IN HISTORY

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was born in 571 A.D. His father Abdullah, died before Muhammad was born. His mother Amina also died when he was about six years old. The grandfather Abdul Muttalib took the responsibility of looking after young Muhammad who had lost all parental care. The grandfather was one of the most important Chiefs of Mecca. He also passed away after few years. Muhammad was then finally taken into the home of his uncle Abu Talib. It was under the care of Abu Talib that Muhammad passed the rest of his childhood and youth.

More than any prophet that ever lived, Muhammad's life and mission is known to the world in minute detail. Friends and foes alike have scrutinized him. Most have recorded nothing but admiration, and praise for Muhammad, Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him

The Holy Quran says about Muhammad:

"Verily you have in the Prophet of Allah an excellent model for him who hopes to meet Allah and the last day and who remembers Allah much.

Ch. 33:22.

The world needs an excellent model, one whose word and deed are the same. Muhammad is the one. How many a time we hear beautiful sermons and teachings from speakers only to find out that the same speakers are unable to follow what they preached.

Muhammad is an excellent model again because he practiced what he preached and passed through every stage of life leaving behind records of how to conduct oneself, in adversity and plenty in pain and success.

An American astronomer, historian and mathematician Michael H. Hart published a 575-page book entitled THE TOP 100 or THE GREATEST 100 IN HISTORY. He selected and studied great men and women from Adam's time to the present. He put Muhammad on top of the list, Moses a close second. Jesus and Buddha came later, this is not surprising since both Muhammad and Moses actually led men most often under very difficult situation and their quality as leaders was put to tough tests.

Historians and world leaders have written about Muhammad and given different views, Christians in the past who could not stomach the fact that God could send another guide apart from Jesus wrote all sorts of garbage about Muhammad. However Christian writers are more objective than in the past and are now freely writing the truth.

Mahatma Gandhi, George Bernard Shaw, John Davenport and other great personalities have paid tribute to Muhammad saying "Muhammad was one in a million" that "he was the greatest man in history". "He was the most successful of all religious personalities". His greatest achievement was recorded as a moral and spiritual guide to mankind. Islam is a testimony to the success of Muhammad. True today, Muslims are not less corrupt than Christians but this situation happens to all religions. In case of Islam, God chose to send a reformer to re-establish the mission of Muhammad after the decadence even as Jesus came to develop the spiritual faculties of the Jews who refused to allow Jesus to purify them.

When we discuss the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad and his divine commission we try to prove from the Scriptures, from the Bible and other books of other religions. This is due to the Muslim's wish and eagerness to share the blessings of knowing Muhammad

with mankind. We are also commanded by Allah to preach the Quran to the world and introduce Muhammad to all. Finally it is our moral duty to share the truth with mankind.

The surprising thing is not that God did appoint someone six centuries after Jesus. No, rather it is incredible that someone may insist on not accepting Muhammad as a prophet. With his life and mission much more known than any biblical Prophet (if someone has not bothered to read that is a different matter) we ask, what possible reasons could one give that may prove that Muhammad is not sent by God? What is found in say, Moses, Jeremiah, Amos, Ezekiel, Jesus or Isaiah that is not found in Muhammad? Or let us put it this way what makes Moses a prophet but Muhammad not a prophet? It is only fair that those who would use every unjust argument and faulty reasoning in rejecting the prophethood of the Muhammad to answer this question.

He was not only a true prophet but the most successful and the master prophet. The proof is "he" even as the sun itself is the proof of the existence of the Sun.

BIBLICAL PROPHECY ABOUT MUHAMMAD

If the Holy Bible is to maintain its credibility as a great prophetic book that foretold major world events and changes, it is impossible to miss out the mention of one of the most influential persons that ever lived, the greatest and the most successful spiritual leader that ever appeared in the world. If Muhammad is a true prophet or God forbid, an imposter either way the Bible cannot ignore him; his place in history is such that he can't be ignored. The Bible (New Testament) was compiled about five centuries before the Holy Prophet Muhammad; however, both old and new Testaments must have prophesized about him.

Muhammad in the Bible is a very lengthy subject; there are many books on this subject. In the next few pages, an article on the Holy Prophet in the bible is reproduced from "The Muslim Herald" September 1981 edition written by Mr. Mansoor A Shah with the

kind permission of the London Mosque publishers of the Muslim Herald.

"We have often condemned violence of all kinds and have done our utmost to foster a spirit of love, understanding, respect for each other and peaceful co-existence among mankind. We have also pointed out that the solution of the problems which confront mankind today lie not in short-term measures which society undertakes, or worse still, buries its head in sand imagining that evil would disappear, but in a more radical change in the hearts and minds of men in reverting back to sound moral virtues by which society governed itself in the past. Those values were based on the recognition of the existence of God almighty and in mankind pressed into acquiring Godly-attributes. We invariably conclude that no system other than Islam contains the solution to these problems in saving mankind from the precipice of destruction. However, one stumbling brick in understanding the teachings of Islam in the West has been the status of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, May peace and blessings of Allah are upon him, whose advent was foretold in the Scriptures of the former people and which are available in the West.

Prophecies to this effect are to be found in the religious Scriptures of almost every faith but the Holy Bible, being the most well known and widely read of all revealed Books before the Holy Quran, being its fore-runner, and in its pristine purity being its counterpart as a Book of Divine Laws, contains the largest number of such prophecies. We reproduce some of these below:

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren; like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him".

(Deut. 18: 18-19)

"And he said, the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them".

(Deut. 33:2).

These references apply to the Holy Prophet, on whom be peace, who was a descendant of Ishmael, the brother of Isaac. The Arab Quraish were the Kedar inhabitants of Paran. The message the Holy Prophet brought commenced 'In the name of Allah'. The prophecy about ten thousand followers refers to the conquest of Mecca when the Holy Prophet marched into that town at the head of exactly ten thousand Companions, holding the Holy Quran in his right hand. If anyone imagines that the Holy Prophet contrived this, let him read the biography of this prophet written by Western critics who pronounced that his knowledge of biblical events was non-existent.

"And many among them shall stumble and fall, and he broken, and be snared, and be taken. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him".

(Isaiah 8: 15-17)

"The burden upon Arabia. In the forest of Arabia shall ye lodge; O ye travelling companions of Dedanim. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they did meet with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn swords, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the Lord said unto me. Within a year according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail. And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken it".

(Isaiah 21: 13-17)

The references in the above prophecy is obviously to Arabia and to the Battle of Badr when the sons of Kedar, the Quraish, suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of Muslims and many of their great fighters and archers were killed in battle.

"And thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name".

(Isaiah 62: 2).

This prophecy foretells of a new people bearing a unique new name, which will be given to them by God Himself. There are only one people in the world that have a name given to them by God in their Scriptures and they are the Muslims. It is to the fulfillment of this prophecy that the Quranic vests clearly refers

"He named you Muslims before and in this Book".
(22:79).

"I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tent of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am swarthy, because the sun has scorched me".

(Song of Solomon 1:506).

How aptly this description applies to the Holy Prophet and the Arabs!

"God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran, Selah, His glory covered the heavens and the earth was full of his praise... He stood and measured the earth; He beheld and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow; his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble".

(Habakkuk 3: 3-7)

Mention has been made here not only of the Holy Prophet, on whom is peace, but also of the country in which was to make his appearance and of the great success that was to attend his mission and the military exploits of his Successors. 'The Holy One' whose praise filled the earth and who appeared from Paran was none else than Muhammad, the Impeccable and the Praised One.

As explained elsewhere he had to lead an Army of 10,000 into war when the enemy showed callous disregard for the solemn treaty and attacked the allies of Prophet Muhammad. Why his Army had to fight

other nations has also been explained. He measured the earth and drove asunder the nations and before his irresistible armies the mighty and long established empires were scattered like chaff before the wind. His message, the Divine Law, lives forever.

'Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, worrier, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas; the founder of twenty territorial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may ask, is there any man greater than he?' (Lamartine, History of Turkey, p.276).

'The more one reflects on the history of Muhammad and of early Islam, the more one is amazed at the vastness of his achievement. Circumstances presented him with an opportunity such as few men have had, but the man was fully marked with the hour. Had it not been for his gifts as seer, statesman, and administrator and, behind these his trust in God and a firm belief that God had sent him, a notable chapter in the history of mankind would have remained unwritten'.

((M. Montgomery Watt, Mohammad at Medina, p.336).

These are the praises the world showers on the Holy Prophet, on whom be peace. In the 100 Great lives. A Ranking of the Most influential Persons in History, Muhammad is ranked FIRST before Newton, Christ, Buddha, Confucius and St. Paul in that order.

Jesus saith unto them, did ye never read in the Scriptures? The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner, this is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore, say I unto you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall, it will grind him to powder.
(Matt. 21: 42-45)."

After Jesus, on whom be peace, the spiritual kingdom was forever taken away from the House of Israel and given to another nation i.e. the Ishmaelites who have brought forth the right fruits thereof. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, the Ishmaelite, was the stone, which the builders rejected and which became the head of the corner on which the Kingdom of God Almighty was now established. The application of this prophecy cannot be disputed or doubted. After all are not the pastors shouting all over the world that Hagar and her son Ishmael were rejected and cast away into the wilderness? Haven't they preached this sermon with glee and vigour for centuries and millennia, now if according to Jesus Christ God has reversed the fortunes of the rejected family can they change the goal post by inventing a different interpretation for the obvious change of circumstance!

Another fulfillment of this great statement took place in a grand manner during the life and mission of the prophet Muhammad peace and blessing of Allah be unto him. He was maltreated, he suffered humiliation and persecution. He was rejected and ridiculed until he had to flee his hometown into exile. Later the same Muhammad; the stone the builders of Mecca rejected became the head not only of Mecca but the master of Arabia and who ever attacked him were vanquished and those who had to be punished due to their aggression were totally defeated. This is a historical fact, which completely fulfils Jesus' parable.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. (John 16: 12-14).

This prophecy too applies to the Holy Prophet of Islam. He was the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth. Long before he became a prophet the people of Mecca had already conferred the title Assaddique. on him which means 'The truthful one or the man with the spirit of

truth. He was also known as 'Al-Amin' the trusted one. This could not have been a mere co-incidence. He guided mankind to the all-embracing truth because he brought the most complete and perfect law. He glorified Jesus and all other Prophets of God, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all (4:158-160). Then the Holy Prophet, on whom be peace, did not speak of himself, but whatsoever he heard that did he speak. About him, the Holy Quran says

Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed

(53. 4-5).

This selection of verses should convince those who read the Holy Bible that the advent of a prophet was anxiously awaited by both Christians and Jews and some of these happily embraced Islam when the Holy Prophet made claim to the fact that he came in fulfillment of past prophecies as a Mercy and Blessing unto all mankind. Should we still continue to deny his claims and follow those who have unanimously failed to solve our problems, or should we accept his claim and live at peace among ourselves?

Courtesy of "The Review of Religions"

Chapter 10

AHMADIYYAT THE TRUE ISLAM

The Ahmadiyya Muslim mission was established by the Promised Reformer of this age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India. He came with the spirit and power of the prophets of God. His appearance around the middle of last century was timely for the Muslims of India in particular and the world in general. Initially he was hailed by the Muslims as a saviour. The Muslims were living in precarious times. The Christian Pastors and missionaries attacked Islam hoping to finish it off as a potent religion on one hand and on the other the revived Hindu Arya Samajist attacked the Holy Founder of Islam trying to reverse his position as a great spiritual teacher to mankind. The Aryas mostly used slander and abusive language.

From the fertile plains of Punjab, land of five rivers, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian sounded the notice to all Christians, Hindus, and everyone that the defender of Islam with the spirit and mantle of prophethood is ready for the battle of the religions not with sword or spears but reason argument and spiritual truths.

The first book he wrote Barahin-eAhmadiyya i.e. Evidences in support of Ahmad (The other name of Muhammad) was published and widely distributed in India. The challenge in this book was simple. "These are the arguments in support of the truth of Islam and its Prophet Muhammad. Produce better or equal arguments from your own sources or Holy Books in support of your religion". A prize of 1,000 rupees a huge amount at that time was offered to any of the adversaries of Islam who could successfully meet the challenge. None dare take it up.

The Muslims were elated and the opponents were dumbfounded. God seemed to have come to the rescue of Islam by sending Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

The Muslims were then expecting a leader who was to come and re-establish the supremacy of Islam. The Muslims like the Jews before them thought that the leader referred to as Al-Mahdi would use the sword for this purpose. The Mahdi has also been called the Promised

Messiah by the Holy prophet himself. Even though the Muslims acclaimed Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a saviour, as soon as he claimed under divine command that he was the Al-Mahdi and the Promised Messiah, he was overnight branded a "Kafir" an infidel and agent of the Devil. This in itself is not very strange. The Holy Prophet himself before his claim was the darling of the Meccans. They affectionately called him Al-Amin. As Sadiq, The Trustworthy the Truthful. As soon as he claimed to be a prophet and announced his mission to stop idol worship a price was put on his head. He was charged with madness and sorcery.

As it is with Divine movements his, followers continued growing despite the opposition from the Muslim priests, the Pharisees and the clergymen of the time. In 1889 he established the Ahmadiyya community within Islam under Divine command. He brought no new religion or book. He rekindled the flame of Islam, which was then very dim.

He died in 1908 after firmly establishing the supremacy of Islam with the pen in about 80 books and booklets; he left behind an active missionary sect, which is Islam in Spirit and substance.

In the past one century Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been guided by elected successors of the Promised Messiah known as Khalifatul Masih. The present head or Khalifatul Masih, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad is in a temporal stay in London, U.K. due to ordinances passed by the late dictator of Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq which made it impossible for him to discharge his duties as the Supreme Head of the world-wide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. The first century of the community has been a difficult one but Allah has rewarded the difficulties with great progress and expansion, numbering over 25 million people in about 180 countries.

The Promised Messiah received a revelation when his community was unknown.

"I shall cause thy message to reach all corners of the earth".

Today the Mission of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community spread over all the continents and the Islands of the world is a testimony to the fulfillment of this prophecy.

The Muslim Mullah or bigoted clergyman claims the "honour" of being the bitterest opponents of Ahmadi Muslims, not Christians or Hindus or Jews. Like the first Messiah Jesus, whose own people demanded for his blood, not the pagan Greeks or Romans, the second Messiah suffered similar persecution from his own people, Muslims.

With the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 into secular India and Muslim Pakistan the headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community moved from Qadian, which became part of India to Rabwah in Pakistan.

After the euphoria of the creation of Pakistan the Mullahs¹¹ turned their full venom against the Ahmadiyya Community. Large-scale riots and harassment of Ahmadis took place in 1953. The then Bhutto's Government orchestrated killing of Ahmadis in 1973 for politico-religious reasons. The author personally witnessed the burning and razing to the ground Ahmadi Muslim shops in Faisalabad, Pakistan one morning in 1973.

Finally, Bhutto's administration got an amendment in the constitution made to declare Ahmadis non-Muslims in 1974. According to Bhutto this was a great service to Islam and he hoped to 'make a huge political gain from this parliamentary act. This was a shame for Pakistan, it was the first time that a government, for political reasons had declared a sect within Islam, "non Muslim" a community whose love for Islam is reflected in their strict adherence to the belief and practice of Islam, and whose history is a history of selfless service and propagation of Islam across the world.

Bhutto was pleased with his action unfortunately he displeased God and God permitted him to commit a mischief. He was swiftly executed by another pathologically anti-Ahmadi dictator of Pakistan Gen. Zia-ul-Haq who had overthrown Bhutto in a military coup to establish a Mullah-cum military dictatorship in Pakistan.

¹¹ Prominent Mullahs strongly opposed the creation of Pakistan but once it came into being they claimed credit for it and claimed to be the guardian of Pakistan.

Gen. Zia-ul Haq actively pressed into motion decrees to limit the freedom of conscience for Ahmadis. Finally in 1984 he passed an ordinance making it a non bail-able criminal offence for an Ahmadi to practice his religion, which is nothing but Islam in spirit and letter.

Since the passage of this ordinance thousands of Ahmadis have been arrested, hundreds jailed and tortured and their assassination legitimized. More than 50 prominent Ahmadis in Pakistan including professors, medical specialists and ordinary people have been assassinated and not a single assassin has been prosecuted. For the Ahmadis there is no protection in Pakistan, their house and property have been razed to the ground, with impunity, sometimes the state security services looked on as the looting and arson went on.

Amnesty International, the U. S. Congress, U.N. Committee on Human Rights and many governments have protested to the authorities in Pakistan over the serious human rights abuse in Pakistan directed officially against the Ahmadies.

Hadzrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad the then supreme head and Imam of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community issued a warning to Gen Zia-ul Haq in 1987 to desist from the persecution of innocent Ahmadis or face the wrath of Allah in one year. In a deeply moving sermon he invoked the curse of Allah on any of the two parties who is the liar, Gen. Zia-ul Haq and his followers or He, Mirza Tahir Ahmad and his Community.

There is a well-known Muslim way of asking for a Divine decision when either of the two parties insists that it is right and the other is wrong. It is known as **MUBAAHALAH**.

Apparently the Head of the Ahmadiyya Community had to take the painful decision of taking this matter to the Supreme Court of God for a decision, not because the Pakistani Government did not believe Ahmadis as Muslims, not even the intolerable persecution forced him to act like this, but, because a deliberate campaign of slander and character assassination against Ahmadiyyat, its founder and leadership was being carried on to deceive the world and cause hatred and enmity between Ahmadis and their neighbors throughout the

world. The dictatorship aided by the Mullah had exceeded all bound in lies and shameless fabrications.

A deliberate campaign was launched to change the definition of a Muslim. Throughout the history of Islam, an open declaration by a person of the Muslim creed **LAA ILAAHA ILLALLAHU MUHAMMADU RASUULULLAH**. "There is none worthy of worship but Allah, Muhammad is Allah's Messenger" was the accepted way of becoming a Muslim.

Now there is a campaign to ignore this. The Mullahs are saying that "you have to believe in Islam according to our interpretation and as we understand it. And deviation from how we see and understand the tenets of Islam puts you out of Islam". This stand in itself does not mean anything, in all religions of the world different sects and denominations have branded each other as disbelievers and heretics and sometimes killed each other, but that was in the middle ages. This is the age of enlightenment and tolerance but the Mullahs who also live in this age insist on taking us back to medieval fickle mindedness. Today these same Mullahs are the greatest impediment in the way of Islam. Their actions and pronouncements make people hate Islam. They literally prevent decent people from seeing the light of Islam. They carry with them a bitter and intolerant collection of beliefs they call Islam unfortunately.

Zia-ul-Haq scorned the request for Divine Judgement from the Head of the Ahmadiyya Community. God was swift in his judgment, A few weeks after the warning of the supreme head General Zia-ul Haq and some of his top generals perished in a mysterious air crash, which has defied the explanation of top aviation experts from both Pakistan and the U.S.

For an Ahmadi there is a dilemma. In Pakistan his life is under constant threat from bigoted Muslim clergyman, outside Pakistan as in the Pacific he has to defend Islam against the "terrorists and killer image" of Muslims. It is as if one says my people are not killers only to dive now and then to escape the bullet of assassins from the same people he is defending

We would like to tell the world that this is not a dilemma in reality. 99 percent of Muslims are not hotheads like the Mullahs in Pakistan.

From Indonesia to Mauritania Muslim sects may disagree but they don't behave like the Mullahs in Pakistan. Even in Pakistan itself the ordinary people, the silent majority and some clergymen abhor this Mullahs path of slander, fickle mindedness and assassinations. Ahmadiis are therefore right in telling the world that Islam is a most tolerant religion despite the ever-present threat to life from the Pakistani Mullahs and their agents and similar minded people in the Middle East. The Mullahs have now succeeded in exporting their hate agenda against Ahmadiis to Indonesia, Malaysia and Bangla Desh. Thank God, so far the governments in these countries have not succumbed to pressure.

The Ahmadiis on our part do not care at all so far as the resolutions and pronouncements of Mullah and Mulla-phobia politicians are concerned. They may pass million amendments and resolutions, on the Day of Judgment, neither Gen Zia-ul-Haq nor Bhutto will sit on the Supreme Court bench of Allah. They themselves will have to answer for their crimes of orchestrating the making of Ahmadi widows and orphans in Pakistan and forcing the flow of rivers of tears from the eyes and the breasts of innocent women and children whose husbands, brothers and fathers are murdered, their only crime is that they have chosen to accept Islam as their faith and the Imam of the age and refuse any other creed imposed on them by the Mullahs.

Indeed on that day the prosecution will be the angels who witnessed the murders committed in the holy name of Islam. The only True Judge will be Allah. How true has the Holy Quran explained:

"Say, everyone acts according to his own way, and your Lord knows very well who is well guided".

(Holy Quran 15: 85.)

CHAPTER 11

THE GULF CRISIS

George Bush Senior, the President of the United States after Ronald Reagan in reaction to the unjust occupation of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein led a coalition of 32 countries to unleash a terrible destruction on Iraq. This was known as '*THE GULF WAR*' George Bush, boasted that Iraq had been bombed into the Stone Age. Many Muslim countries took part in the war against Iraq with the aim of evicting Iraq from Kuwait. It was generally thought that this was a legitimate war for clearly Iraq had refused all international efforts to get them to leave and seek a negotiated settlement of its claims. One might quickly add that Iraq was not the only nation to defy the United Nations. Israel is a persistent offender and no one thinks of enforcing the resolutions of the United Nations in respect of Israel. This deeply hurts and offends the Palestinians, majority of who are Muslims.

The Holy Quran urges the Muslims to fight the aggressor till the aggressor refrains from aggression or is defeated. Once the aggression had been terminated then a just settlement has to be put in place without resorting to vindictiveness and deliberate humiliation of the defeated party. This is essential.

'And if two parties of believers fight each other make peace between them then if after that one of them transgresses against the other, fight the other that transgresses until it returns to the command of Allah.

Then if it returns, make peace between them with equity and act justly.

Very Allah loves the just'. Holy Quran 49:10

The tragedy of Iraq is in the inaction of the Muslim countries to uphold the Quranic teachings when Iraq first attacked Iran without justification. The Muslim states failed in their responsibility by not implementing the Quranic injunction. Instead, some Muslim countries

actively supported and financed Iraq, which made her very strong. This was a clear violation of the teachings of the Holy Quran.

Just after the end of the Iraq-Iran war, Iraq attacked and seized Kuwait where America had vital oil interest. Here again the Muslim States did not come together to fight Iraq after failing in their attempt to get Iraq to respect Islam and also accept international law. If Muslims were true to their faith, that was what they should have done. This inaction allowed the United States to gleefully take charge of the situation and lead the war to evict Iraq from Kuwait.

Fair enough, the international community acted to drive the Iraqi invaders from Kuwait.

Unfortunately after the defeat of Iraq this second part of the verse,

'then if it returns, make peace between them with justice and equity'

was totally ignored sowing the seed for more future conflict. A very unjust and punitive sanction regime was imposed by the Security Council, which has no Muslim representation with Veto power. Saddam Hussein was bad granted but the conditions imposed on Iraq due to Saddam Hussein were even worse. It became very clear that the Western powers, which initiated the war against Saddam Hussein, had a totally different agenda from the mere enforcement of international law. Some areas of Iraq were declared no go area for the government of Iraq by the United States and Britain. It was extremely naïve to believe that the sanctions would hurt Saddam Hussein and his regime. It was infants and the ordinary people of Iraq who took most of the punishment. Iraq was continuously harassed for over ten years with threats and bombardments.

George Bush Junior became the president of the United States and decided to finish the job of his father by removing Saddam once for all. The opportunity for this passion of the new president George Bush Jr. was provided by the shocking and infamous attack on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon by suicide attackers who seized four commercial planes and succeeded in driving three into their targets, killing innocent passengers and people working for their

daily bread in the twin towers of the World Trade Centre. The victims included people of all faiths, men women and children who had nothing to do absolutely with American foreign policies. The whole world rallied to support and sympathize with the United States and rightly condemned this wanton act of terrorism.

U.S. intelligence blamed Al Qaida led by Osama Bin Laden for this act. Since Osama and his group had been protected and accommodated in Afghanistan by the hard liner Taliban government, the United States and her allies decided to attack Afghanistan which had given sanctuary to Bin Laden and his followers.

Before the hostilities began, the United States had demanded that Osama and his close associates should be extradited to the U.S. for trial on the charge of terrorism. The Taliban refused arguing that they did not have extradition treaty with the United States and offered to have them tried in a neutral country. The United States at that particular time and circumstances was not inclined to accept any compromise. She was a nation spoiling for a fight. The U.S and her allies launched a full scale attack to overthrow the Taliban and bring Al Qaeda to justice. The determination of the rag tag Taliban army which had martyrdom as its main weapon was no match for the might of the U.S, the only surviving super power. The sacking of the Taliban was obtained quickly with the support of Afghan warlords opposed to the Taliban thus minimizing American and allied casualties. Like the Gulf war ten years earlier massive air bombardment was heavily employed for which the Taliban had no answer whatsoever.

The Taliban leadership together with Osama and his close associates melted into the mountains of Afghanistan. The U.S. tried to bomb them out ferociously with little success. Osama and his group continued to operate from the mountains of Afghanistan. The world generally considered the Afghan war a just response to Al Qaeda terrorism. However military victory of the U.S. did not solve the problem of terrorism. Osama Bin Laden remained in business at least serving as an icon for extremists. Many people across the globe who are not happy with American foreign policy saw him as a hero. Many parents in northern Nigeria and elsewhere named their children after Osama even after the sacking of the Taliban. The problem of

Afghanistan was not solved when George Bush and his allies made a fatal mistake of going to war again within two years of the Afghanistan war.

THE SECOND GULF WAR

An elaborate orgy of deception of the world was put in place by the United States administration with the full support of Britain. The world was again and again fed with the propaganda that Saddam Hussein possessed huge arsenal of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, which Saddam was ready to unleash on the world in forty-five minutes! Many were skeptical. Despite a lot of hand twisting the United Nations refused to sanction a new war against Iraq. America with its overwhelming power fully assisted by Britain using countries like Australia and some ex-communist countries more for decoration than any real need and to give a resemblance of international effort, invaded Iraq, overthrew the government and later captured Saddam Hussein after betrayal by some of his aggrieved relatives. He was later tried and hanged by the new government put in place by the U,S Army.

This was the *SECOND GULF WAR* in about twelve years against Saddam Husseins Iraq.

The so-called '*coalition of the willing*' openly defied international law by attacking Iraq without the authority of the U.N. Here it was clearly 'might is right' no matter what the United States tries to tell the world.

Let it be on record. Let no one forget that the main reason given to the world for the invasion of Iraq was that **Saddam possessed huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction and was about to unleash them. Not that Saddam was a despot or a terrorist; there was no single credible evidence that Saddam was in any way linked with the terrorists attack on the world Trade Centre.**

Even George Bush admitted to that much. Fine gentlemen like Colin Powell and Tony Blair dramatized eloquently and continuously that the world was in a grave danger, providing numerous 'intelligence' dossiers to the world. The overwhelming majority of the world was

skeptical and believed that even if it were true that Iraq had these weapons, war was not the answer, the United Nations' mechanism of Weapons Inspection should be allowed to complete the work of disarming Iraq. George Bush was in an indecent haste to invade and literally told the U.N to go to hell. Demonstrations against the war were held across the globe. These two gentlemen, the prime advocates of democracy just ignored the voice and wishes of their people and overwhelming world public opinion. Even now people in Britain do not see why they were forced into this adventure.

After the war when the victors had total control of Iraq a massive hunt was conducted to uncover the much-dramatized weapons of mass destruction, which threatened the world in order to prove their case to the good people of the world. The United States alone sent in 1400 highly trained specialist to search for the weapons. A close confidant of the administration David Kay was chosen to head the team.

Today the cat is out of the bag. The truth has come out. Many years after the 'liberation' of Iraq',

'Not even rat poison has been found in Iraq' as one observer puts it.

The leaders of the war including George Bush, Tony Blair, and Peter Howard of Australia and the prime minister of Spain were totally discredited before the world public opinion no matter what excuse their supporters try to give. Tony Blair amended his reasons saying that *Saddam indeed had a 'programme' for weapons of mass destruction* and very much praying that at least something could be found to restore his credibility. George Bush later totally avoided the mention of Weapons of Mass Destruction WMD and concentrated more on how brutal Saddam was, as if there were no more dictators left in the word apart from Saddam.

A cartoon in one American paper explains it all. There is George Bush angrily shouting back at those who are asking him to produce Saddam's chemical biological and nuclear weapons. He retorts;

'We have not found Bin Laden yet' does it mean he does not exist! Why do you guys disturb me!'

Paul O'Neill the former Treasury Secretary of Bush recently spilled the beans. He said it all in an interview that George Bush, as soon as he entered the White House planned to invade Iraq. David Kay, Bush's trusted weapons hunter resigned saying he found nothing, and that there is no likelihood of finding anything substantial. He further said that Saddam has not produced such weapons since 1991 after the first Gulf War. His deputy who was appointed to replace him earlier made similar assessment. So after all Saddam was not *the liar*. We now know that he did not lie to the world or the United Nations. We now know who the liars are.

Many Iraqis are actively resisting the occupation of their country violently. The coalition calls these people terrorists and they have been included in the list of international terrorists. Are they? We are not talking about the foreign elements who have taken advantage of the uninvited U.S. presence and are waging their own war. We only ask concerning the Iraqis whose country has been turned upside down by the U.S and its allies with the new justification of democratization which has resulted in a civil war which created a body count of about fifty every day. Democracy with guns and bombs resulting in Iraqi corpses? Is that how they built their own cherished freedom and democracy!

The Al-Qaeda in Iraq which is causing untold destruction did not exist under Saddam Hussein. It is the direct result of the invasion of Iraq. It created many more angry young men across the Middle East exacerbating terrorism in the world.

The United States has done a lot of good in the world leading mankind in the medical research, fight against poverty and disease with genuine concern for other less endowed nations. Her citizens have fought and died in the past so that many in the world may be free particularly in the World Wars. President Kennedy launched the Peace Corps with genuine desire and passion for America to share and care. The fact that the CIA was allowed to infiltrate this noble endeavour occasionally does not distort the overall noble American Spirit.

Since then many of her military adventures overt and covert from Chile to Vietnam, Grenada to Cambodia, Nicaragua and the support

to the UNITA in Angola, were more for ideological pursuits than moral values. It will be sad if she allows her admirable record to be eroded by idealist adventurers who trust in their arms and weapons to achieve their goals than sound and honest assessment of their foreign policy. Is it not amazing that fine men and women in the United States have allowed themselves to be programmed into believing that Muslims hate them for their liberty and freedom instead of careful analysis of the possible reasons as to why such a large number of people on this planet that we share together passionately hate them and are prepared to die to cause maximum mayhem to America! Why won't the sober majority sit up and ask "why would so many people in Nigeria and elsewhere name their new born children Osama or Bin Laden when it is difficult to find people calling their loved ones Hitler or Halaku Khan for example' Why is it that nobody is bold enough to declare the truth openly that the immediate and remote causes more than any other factor is the U.S. policy in the Middle East which is creating generations of angry and most often irrational young men and women, not Islam Christianity or Judaism.

Finally what has all this turmoil in the world got to do with the true Islam anyway?

Nothing absolutely!

Islam has nothing to do with September 11 just as Muslims do not support the Iraq adventures of George Bush and Tony Blair. It is very important to remember always that the then leader of the world's most important Christian Church, Pope John Paul II strongly opposed the war against Iraq so did the Arch Bishop of Canterbury. Therefore Bush's war is not a new Christian crusade against Islam even as the September 11 attack was not Muslims 'Jihad' on Christianity. ***This is a crucial fact for all of us to bear in mind always.*** An avoidable rift and tension between Muslims and Christians is being created even where there is no such thing. The right wing idealists in Washington and intolerant Mullahs in Afghanistan have their own agenda, which are neither Christian values nor Islamic tolerance. Islam and Christianity both stand for peace love and human dignity for all. This indeed is the truth.

REMINDER TO MUSLIMS

The Holy Quran which is the principal source of guidance for all Muslims has taught us

"And let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is aware of what you do" Ch. 5;9

Even when Muslims feel strongly aggrieved they are warned not to act unjustly, terrorism is one of the most unjust acts resulting in pain and suffering among the totally innocent. Our beloved Holy Prophet strongly prohibited the killing of women children, and the elderly. He prohibited the cutting down of the fruit bearing trees of the enemy even during full scale war. Those of our brethren who indulge in terrorism as weapons of war, revenge or to counter terrorism must know that such acts does not represent Islam in any way. More sensible ways should be adopted to solve the injustice in the world. The Islamic morality is the highest known to man. The greatest Jihad especially in these troubled times is self restraint at provocations and the peaceful spread of Islamic teachings, morality and spirituality. This is what the world needs now absolutely, not retaliation, terrorism or counter terrorism camouflaged in the garb of Jihad.

All praise belongs to Allah the Lord of all mankind.



The author is the first Ghanaian to commit the entire Holy Quran into memory. After that he obtained (H.A). Honours in Arabic from the Punjab University, Pakistan and finally graduated from the Jamaats Institute of Higher Learning, Jamia Ahmadiyya, Rabwah, Pakistan.

After serving as a missionary in Ghana for three and half years, he was transferred to the Fiji islands where he encountered deep seated mistrust of Islam in the Pacific in general.

He was entrusted with the responsibility of presenting Islam in the Islands at the time of great turmoil and bloodshed in the Middle East which was ignorantly blamed on Islam. The period from 1989 to 1993 was particularly very challenging years for anyone preaching Islam especially in the islands of the Pacific due to unprecedented violence in the Middle East. It was during this time the book was written and published in Fiji to answer the objections raised against Islam in the Pacific Islands.

Though the islands are the prime object of the book, nevertheless all the issues raised and discussed are relevant to people everywhere who seek answers to many issues associated with Islam rightly or wrongly.



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